

IDIC

IDIC Log 8



a Star Trek
fanzine

CONTENTS

Leila - Love Story	by Maggy	P 3
The Lament of Lt. Smith	by Kathleen Glancy	P 16
Coaches at Midnight	by Sandy Catchick	P 17
Logic	by Bettina Rackel	P 29
Death on the Sand	by Sheryl Peterson	P 30
Faces Past and Present	by Margaret Connor	P 33
The Best of Times...		
The Worst of Times	by Nicole Comtet	P 34
The Unsung Heroes	by Christine Jones	P 59
A Conversation	by Mrs Pippin	P 60
Keepers of the Dream	by Christine Jones	P 61
What Am I?	by Maggy	P 62
The Magnificent Seven		
of the Enterprise	by Christine Jones	P 79
Beneath Three Moons	by Gail Christison	P 80
Heroes	by Benjamin Jones	P 98
Artwork -		
Ann Humphrey - cover		
Keren Breen - P 2		
Nicole Comtet P 42, 55, 58		

An IDIC publication

Editors - Sheila Clark, Valerie Piacentini
Typing - Sandy Catchick, Gail Christison, Sheila Clark,
Valerie Piacentini, Ingrid Smith, Karen Sparks
Proofreading - Janet Quarton, Sheila Clark & Valerie Piacentini
Printing of Masters - Janet Quarton
Printing - Urban Print, 57 Perth Road, Dundee.
Distracting - Shona & Cindy

IDIC Log 8 is put out by IDIC and is available from -

Sheila Clark
6 Craigmill Cottages
Strathmartine
by Dundee
Scotland

(C) IDIC February 1992. All rights reserved to the writers and artists. Anyone wishing to reprint any of the material herein is asked to obtain permission in writing first. It is understood that this applies only to original material herein, and that no attempt is made to supersede any rights held by Paramount, NBC, BBC or any other holders of copyright in STAR TREK material.

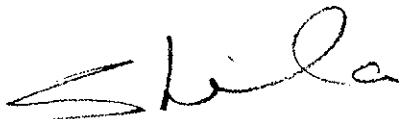
EDITORIAL

Hello, and welcome to IDIC Log 8. We have a lot of people to thank for helping to type this issue. An increasing number of writers are sending in their work on disc, and we also have about a dozen volunteer typists. We really appreciate the help you are all giving us.

We've got some excellent material in this issue, from both 'old' writers and new. It's also an international issue; as well as British writers, we have Nicole Comtet, one of our French members; and we also have stories from Australia, from Gail Christison and Sheryl Peterson.

It's been a little while since we printed anything by Sheryl, a sensitive and very able writer. We now have some new submissions from her. Many of these were first printed in Conquest, an Australian zine.

We are always looking for more submissions, both of Classic Trek and Next Generation. Classic Trek submissions should be sent to Valerie Piacentini, 20 Ardrossan Road, Saltcoats, Ayrshire, Scotland; and TNG submissions should be sent to Sheila Clark, 6 Craigmill Cottages, Strathmartine, by Dundee DD3 0PH, Scotland.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sheila". The signature is written in dark ink on a plain white background.



LEILA

A LOVE STORY

by

Maggy

Leila had been working all night, and she was tired.

The results of the tests she had been conducting had proved useless, her hair was a mess and she was thoroughly fed up. To top it all she had been chosen to show a Starfleet Science Officer the experimental units tomorrow... today!

She knew that if she didn't get a coffee and shower in the next hour she'd never make it through the boring day that lay ahead.

She unzipped the nylon coverall and walked to the shower room. The water made her gasp because it was only lukewarm. Leila pulled, pushed and banged the button control, but there was no change. Perhaps it was time to think about investing in a new shower unit. She had heard that the new type sonic showers were to be available to the general public soon; if they were not too expensive she might try one. But if she was transferred to an off-world unit, which was possible, it would be a waste of money, and that was in short supply. She enjoyed her work as a Research Botanist, but the pay was terrible!

As she stood and let the almost-cold water wash away the tiredness, she thought about her future. Working on Earth was interesting but no challenge. All the plants had been recorded and researched; but the realms of space - they held new undiscovered worlds. Many had no life at all, but some were jungles filled with a lifetime's supply of new and interesting species. The search for alternative food was increasing along with an ever-growing population and pollution problem on the planets of the Federation.

Stepping out of her shower, she tried to operate the hot-air dryer, but that refused to work at all, so she hunted angrily for a towel.

She really must get a maintenance man to come and put things right. She had spent so much time at work lately that things had been neglected. She made a promise to herself that if the coffee-pot didn't work she would go to bed and never get up again!

But her fears were groundless, and she sat to watch the latest news while the coffee gurgled and bubbled. There wasn't too much to interest her until the bulletin about the arrival of the Starship Enterprise. It had docked in order that damage to the hull could be repaired. There had been a confrontation with the Klingons near the Romulan Neutral Zone. It seemed as though there were always battles going on there.

Enterprise. The name was familiar. Then she remembered, that

was the name of the ship the Starfleet Science Officer was from. She paid more attention to the item. A man's face appeared on the screen. It was Captain Pike. He was talking very matter-of-factly about the damage to the huge ship. Behind him she could see members of the crew getting ready to disembark. A tall dark figure had his back to the camera. She caught sight of the blue uniform with gold braid. The uniform of the science section! But quickly though she realized who it was, he had vanished from the screen. Never mind, she would meet him soon enough.

The coffee revived her. She had several cups before dressing and brushing her blonde hair into a more presentable state.

Collecting her handbag and the papers she had completed the previous night, she checked the flat to make sure all was well before leaving to catch an air-taxi to the experimental station.

The security guard smiled a welcome. "Hello, Miss Kalomi, back so soon? Thought you'd be asleep most of today."

"I wish I could, Pete, but I've a scientist to show around."

"Yes, I know about that. Orders from the top brass to let him through without any delays - must be important."

She smiled. "So I believe. His father's a diplomat or something," and she waved goodbye and made her way to the reception building. Her boss was waiting. She didn't like Martin Cassell very much.

"Hi, Leila. I'm sorry to drag you back so soon."

"Oh, it's all right," she said, thinking, *Oh, no it isn't.*

"Yes, well, you come through into my office."

Why did he remind her of the spider talking to the fly? However, she followed him into his private office. It was large and open plan, well furnished, not at all like the "broom closet" she'd been assigned.

Cassell pulled out a chair and she sat down. He paced about a bit, and then perched on the edge of his desk. "As you know, the Starship Enterprise is here for repairs. We have had a request from Starfleet that one of their Science Officers be given access to our latest research. Apparently he is an A6 rated scientist, a computer genius. There's just one thing, he is a Vulcan. Starfleet thinks he may be able to solve some of those problems we've been having - in short, the bighead thinks he can come here and solve all the problems that have stumped the best brains we've got." Bitterness had crept into his voice. If Leila had only been half listening before, she now gave him her full attention. It wasn't often that Martin lost his cool.

"Of course his father is some bigwig in the Vulcan Embassy, so that's probably why everyone's falling over backwards for him. You know about Vulcans, don't you?"

She stared at him. There was such hatred in his voice.

"Well, I... "

"They think we're all inadequate, emotional messes."

"I thought they had a reputation as a clever race - advanced..."

He glared at her. "Well, *they* certainly think so! Anyway, Leila, you must show this spoilt brat about, answer his questions, generally see to his needs and - " the voice hardened - "get rid of him as soon as possible."

"Why me?"

"Because no-one else wanted the job - and anyway you are better suited than the others."

"Why?" she repeated again.

"Because, my dear, you are the only one who is clever enough to be able to answer the questions he's bound to ask. The rest of the staff are just a bunch of glorified gardeners. That is why, Leila, I've put your name forward for promotion - and I can tell you now, it's been approved."

She was taken aback by this news. "Martin, I don't know what to say."

"Well, there's a job coming up that would be an ideal chance for you, a botanist of world repute. Elias Sandoval is going to set up an experimental colony on some planet in the Omicron sector, and he needs a team of people to help. It could be a 5 year posting, with chances of extending that if desired. Are you interested?"

"I... don't know. I think so. Can I have some time to think about it?"

"Sure. Let's just concentrate on getting rid of that alien, then we can get together one evening and talk about it over dinner."

She didn't like the sound of that. Martin had never made a secret of the fact he would have liked their working relationship to develop into a more personal one, but so far she had managed to avoid it.

Business and pleasure never mixed - and anyway, she was engaged to Alan.

Alan. She had met him four years ago, and got engaged last Christmas. He was nice, safe, reliable and would make a good husband. Her mother liked him. Why then did she find him boring? No; that wasn't fair. More... predictable. That was it, *predictable*.

"He's here." Martin's voice broke into her thoughts.

"Who?"

"The alien."

"Oh, Martin, don't say that. He must have a name."

"Spock. *Mr.* Spock! Have you ever heard a more stupid name?" he laughed. "Well, he's on his way over here. I'll leave you to it." Martin turned as he reached the door. "Good luck."

She sighed with relief. This job was going to be hard enough, without Martin making things worse.

A few moments later she heard the door quietly open and Mr. Spock stood there. She had not given a lot of thought as to what he would look like. Everyone had talked about his intelligence or his father's importance.

Spock was tall, thin, his skin tinted the faintest green. He had dark eyes and hair... and his face - she was stunned. He was beautiful. He was so *beautiful*. Leila would never have thought to use that word to describe a man; *handsome*, maybe, but there was something so special about the man who stood watching her that 'beautiful' kept coming into her mind. He must have sensed something, because he raised an eyebrow and stepped closer.

"Miss Kalomi? I am Spock."

She still stood and stared. He was dressed in a regulation Starfleet uniform, blue top, indicating a member of the science section, black trousers and soft black boots.

"Miss Kalomi?" he repeated.

"Oh, I'm sorry," she stuttered.

"Is there something wrong?" His voice was quiet, unhurried, deep.

"NO! I'm sorry, Mr. Spock, I'm just tired. Work kept me up most of last night."

"I see." The dark eyes flitted across the room, missing nothing.

"Would you like a coffee before we start the tour?" she asked.

"No, thank you, I do not drink coffee."

"Well, we might as well get going. Will you follow me. The hothouses will be as good a place as any to start."

"Very well."

As they toured the buildings Mr. Spock caused heads to turn, but he seemed oblivious of the stares. She thought he must be used to it. He was very different from anyone she'd ever known. He never used more words than necessary; never smiled, even at her jokes; immediately understood even the most complicated experiments; had an unending curiosity about everything he came into contact with; and much to Leila's annoyance, would reveal nothing about himself.

By midday she had began to relax, and did not feel so self-conscious. Spock was easy to be with, in a strange way. He didn't seem to judge, just accepted things as they were. His quiet manner was very restful; she felt as if all the pressures were lifted and her worries gone. He was so easy to please. She had noticed how his ears went to a point. She found them fascinating, and couldn't take her eyes from them.

Finally, as they were making their way to the dining hall, he turned to her and said in his quiet voice, "Miss Kalomi, is there something wrong with my ear?"

She blushed. "No."

"Then why do you stare at it?"

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be rude. I'm sorry."

He did not seem angry, just curious, so she continued. "Mr. Spock, you are the first Vulcan that I've met, and I was just staring. I am truly sorry..." Her voice trailed off.

He looked at her unblinkingly. "If it will be of any help to your curiosity, Miss Kalomi, I will answer any queries you may have about my home and people over lunch, although some things are forbidden to off-worlders, you understand?"

She blushed. "Thank you, Mr. Spock, that will be very interesting - and if there is anything I can enlighten you on regarding Earth, I shall be pleased to do so."

"That will not be necessary. My mother is Terran."

This surprised her. "Your mother is Human?"

"Yes."

"And your father is alien?"

"Vulcan. He is not an alien to me."

She realised he had not liked the reference to 'alien'. She tried to repair the damage. "Yes, Vulcan."

They entered the dining hall and ordered a meal. Spock ordered a plain salad and a glass of water.

"Will that be enough, Mr. Spock? Would you like a sweet?"

"No, I have sufficient for my needs, thank you."

They sat at a corner table that overlooked the fruit-growing areas. At first they both concentrated on eating, but after a while Spock said, "Earth is indeed beautiful, so green. At home red is the dominant colour - everything is very dry."

"Doesn't it rain at all?"

"Oh, it rains, but except in the hills very little, and so seldom as to be immaterial. Our water comes from deep wells fed by underground rivers that flow down from the hills."

"Then there is little plant life?"

"No, but as here, we manage to cultivate a little. My mother grows flowers and vegetables."

She was glad the conversation was back on a more personal level again. "Mr. Spock, how long will you be staying on Earth?"

He looked at her. "Until the Enterprise has been refitted."

"And how long is that expected to take?"

"Approximately 4 point 5 days."

"Good," she smiled. "Then if it is convenient, I would like you to come for a meal at my apartment one evening."

She couldn't believe what she had said! It just seemed to slip out. She had probably blown away any chance of getting to know him better, by being too eager too soon. What must he think of her?

"That is kind. I would be honoured to come."

She could not believe her ears. He was really going to come. She smiled, trying to stop from grinning from ear to ear.

"Oh, thank you!" Now she knew she had over-done it. She could have bitten off her tongue. What a stupid thing to say. She blushed like a school girl.

"I meant to say 'good'. Will you be able to come this evening at 8?"

He nodded. She noticed the tips of his ears had gone a darker green. Was he blushing?

When she arrived back at her apartment, she rushed about tidying away books, clothes and anything else that was out of place. When that was done to her satisfaction, she sat and drank a cup of coffee, thinking back over the day's events. She couldn't believe how much she had enjoyed the company of the Vulcan. After he had left the station most of her fellow researchers had gathered around her, eager to know all about the the visitor. Several had met Vulcans before in the course of their work, and commented on the cold detachment and superior attitudes, but she had not found Spock at all like that. He was very tolerant and, she suspected, shy; his intelligence was indeed far above that of anyone else she had ever met - he had easily understood all the work he had been shown, and she was sure he would be able to solve the few problems the research workers had so far been unable to comprehend.

She suddenly felt a pang of guilt. She had not given Alan a thought all day. *I must phone him*, she told herself, but almost immediately pushed the thought into the back of her mind as she began to plan what to cook for dinner. By 7.45 she was panicking. The food was ready, the flat had never looked so spick and span, and she had changed outfits at least three times.

Fifteen minutes! She paced up and down, dreading and looking forward to Spock's arrival, all at the same time.

At 8pm precisely, the doorbell rang.

She stood frozen to the spot then pulled herself together and opened the door. There he stood, tall, elegant in a dark navy robe, a small silver motife embroidered on the collar.

"Hello," was all she could find to say.

He just stood there. She was flustered for a moment, before realising he was waiting for an invitation to enter.

"Come in."

He did so, still without saying anything, walked to the sofa, changed his mind, and sat in an old wooden upright chair.

"Wouldn't you be more comfortable on the sofa?" she asked.

"This will be perfectly adequate."

He seemed different, stiff and formal. Perhaps her friends had been right. Perhaps the differences between their races were too big to bridge, but his parents had managed to, and that gave her the strength to carry on trying. After all, he had said he was half Human.

"I'm so glad you could come." Now she sounded as formal as he did.

"I had no other engagements tonight," he said quietly.

It made her sound like a 'stop-gap'. She didn't like that, and turned away to fuss with the cutlery until she had composed herself enough to face him again. "I hope you like steak. I managed to bribe the butcher to get me some; it's very hard to come by these days."

He clamped his lips together for a second before replying, "I do not eat the flesh of fellow creatures."

This was not going as well as she had hoped. In fact it was not going well at all. She had paid nearly a full week's wages for the steak. "No problem," she lied. "I can open a can of bean casserole."

"I do not wish to be a burden to you. Perhaps I should leave." He stood.

"Oh, no!" In her eagerness to stop him leaving she held his arm.

He pulled away as if she was a monster, horror on his face. "I really think it better if I leave."

"Please don't," she pleaded.

He stopped and looked at her, then silently sat back down.

She breathed a sigh of relief. "Look, we have got off to a terrible start. Let's begin again," she said.

He seemed to relax a little. "The fault was partly mine. I should tell you that Vulcans do not like to be touched. Perhaps if I can explain some of Vulcan culture, you will understand."

He went on talking in his low quiet voice. She sat enthralled, as he told her about his home planet and the people. The meal was forgotten. It was only when the topic of Vulcan marriage entered the conversation that he became reticent, and said it was time for him to leave. The chronometer showed it was well past midnight. Leila walked with him to the door.

"I'm sorry about the steak, Mr. Spock, it was silly not to check which foods were suitable."

He ignored her apology and looked into her eyes. "Leila - " the first time he had used her first name - "perhaps we could..." He hesitated as if looking for a clue as to how she would respond to what he was going to say. "...go on a picnic?"

"A picnic?" she echoed, disbelief in her voice.

He let a small flicker of disappointment cross his face. "Perhaps not."

"Oh, Mr. Spock, no, I'd love it, I really would. It was only so unexpected. I thought, as you live in such a technical world... Well, a picnic was the last thing I expected you to say."

"I enjoy them," he said simply. "Then you will come with me?"

"Yes please, Spock." She realised she had not said 'Mister', but he didn't seem to notice.

He nodded. She hoped for a kiss of goodbye, but he just said, "I will meet you after your work tomorrow. Good night."

She closed the door and stood leaning against it with a broad smile on her face.

The next day seemed to drag on and on, but at last the bell rang to signal the end of the shift. Leila hurriedly grabbed her coat and rushed to the entrance, but there was no sign of Spock. Perhaps he was held up in traffic. She waited and waited, looking every few moments at her chronometer. Her boss, Martin Cassell, drove up in his brand new aircar. He stopped, level with her, a grin on his face.

"Hello, Leila, waiting for me?"

She forced a smile. "Not tonight, Martin."

"Oh, and who is the lucky man then? Is Alan back?"

"No, he's still in Japan." Just then she saw Spock walking towards her. The pleasure must have shown on her face. Martin followed her gaze and glared.

"It's not HIM, is it? That alien? You must be joking!"

She turned to him angrily, "Martin, first it's none of your business, second, Mr. Spock is more of a man than you'll ever be, and third, when I want your opinion I'll ask for it!"

He smiled, as if she was mad. "Now, now, Leila, you'll learn the hard way. Well, I will leave you to your little green man. See you tomorrow."

He drove off, leaving her to wait for Spock.

They caught an air-taxi to the edge of the hills that rose to the west of the city, and took a slow walk until they reached the side of a small stream. Spock had led the way with such certainty she asked if he had been before.

"Yes," he said. His mother had brought him there as a child, while the family were resident at the Vulcan Embassy. It had been his mother's favourite place to escape the pressures of the diplomatic life.

She noted that he often mentioned his mother, but very seldom his father. Something was wrong between them, but Spock always managed to steer the conversation away to another topic whenever his father was mentioned.

The evening was heaven. They sat and watched the stream tumble and bubble its way over the rocks, on its way down to the sea. The sunlight was just beginning to fade, and danced through the leaves of the trees. It was all so peaceful. No wonder Spock enjoyed it so much, after the pressures of the missions in space.

Spock looked relaxed, as he lay on his back, arms beneath his head, staring up through the trees at the sky. There had been no words between them for some time - they hadn't been needed. Leila picked some small daisies that grew in abundance, and made a daisy chain, which she dropped around Spock's head. She could not believe it... He *smiled*. It happened so quickly, and was over. She at first thought it might have been her imagination, but no, it *had* happened.

She too lay down and rested her head on his crooked arm. This time when she touched him he didn't pull away. She hoped it might lead to further physical contact, but Spock seemed content to just lie near her, gazing up at the sky, watching clouds. She knew she would hold this moment in her memory forever.

Spock saw her back to her apartment and accepted the offer of a fruit juice. She mentioned the faulty shower unit and dryer. Within a few moments he had the control unit dismantled on the floor. She watched as his long supple fingers expertly repaired it and put it back together.

"There, Leila, you should have no further trouble."

As he looked at her a strange look crossed his face, a longing masked with sadness. She couldn't help saying, "Spock, what is it?"

He shook his head, "Nothing. I must go now."

"So early?"

"Yes. Leila, I have enjoyed our time together." There was something final about it. He made his way to the door, she followed.

He turned and gazed at her again, then left without a word. She was upset. He hadn't said that he would see her again.

The following evening she left work hoping he would be waiting for her, but there was no sign. Her heart sank. She went back to her apartment and sat by the window for hours, looking out onto the dark empty street. She was a fool! It had only been two days she had known him - no time at all in the life span of a Vulcan. What

had he said it was again? Approximately 250 years. What was two days? Nothing!

Suddenly she had a thought. Perhaps Spock had heard she was engaged to Alan... Yes, that was it! She snatched up the phone, without thinking, and rang Alan in Japan. Never had she been so impulsive, but a strange overwhelming urge drove her on. Within twenty minutes her engagement was broken. Alan had been dumbfounded, but there was no changing her mind. She knew now what she wanted more than anything, and it wasn't a life with Alan.

Leila lay awake most of the night staring at the ceiling, reliving the last few days, and all the time she could see a pair of dark eyes - *his* eyes. She was wakened by the sound of her door bell; pulling on her dressing gown, she went to answer it.

Spock stood there. He looked uncomfortable, staring at the floor, the wall, anywhere but at her. "I apologize for calling at such an early hour. May we talk?"

She stepped back to allow him in. He didn't sit, but went to stand by the window, looking out at the street just as she had done, hours ago. She went to make coffee and fruit juice. Placing the cups on the small coffee table, she waited for him to say something. When he did, his voice was so soft, she had to strain to hear what he was saying.

"Leila, I must say things to you which I wish could stay unspoken."

She sank into a chair. "Before you say anything Spock, I have to tell you that I've broken my engagement to Alan."

"Alan?"

She realised he had not even known of her engagement. That was not the reason he was here.

"Oh, I thought you had found that I was engaged. I thought that was why you didn't want to see me again."

He didn't understand. "I did not say that I did not want to see you again."

"But after the picnic you didn't... "

"I was unsure as to how to proceed with the friendship. Also I was expected to return to the ship to relieve the Captain. I intended to see you again before we left."

She smiled. "Oh Spock, I thought you didn't like me."

"I do indeed like you, Leila - I like you a lot."

She felt so happy she had forgotten why he had come. But his face had a serious expression.

"There is something else I must say. It is with regard to Human emotions. They are not governed by logic and therefore I do not fully understand them as you do. I am trying to say that I have only the Human half that I am able to give to you, Leila, no more

that that - do you understand? We can continue to see each other, but we are from different worlds. You must understand that there are commitments which I cannot put aside."

She was just so happy. He was willing to continue their relationship, but not commit himself to an engagement or marriage just yet. That was all right; she could wait. After all, he was worth waiting for. She smiled. "I know - I'll skip work and we'll go for another picnic. What do you say?"

"Well, all right." He hesitated, but she soon had him as eager to go as she was. The day was overcast and they hadn't been at the glade long before drops of rain began to fall, gently at first, but faster and faster until they both had to run for the shelter of the aircar Spock had hired.

The rain made a hammering noise on the roof. Leila lay back in her seat, smiling as Spock watched raindrops puddle and plop down the front window. Rain was rare to him, and he watched, fascinated, almost childlike. Her heart ached for him. They had never kissed, never done what most other lovers did... but she felt so close, so bound to him.

He sensed she was thinking of him, she was sure of it. He suddenly turned to her with that look of distress she had seen once before. It was almost as if he could read her mind. He reached across and took her in his arms, just holding her tight. She could feel his heart, smell the gentle perfume of herb soap. His chin rested on her head. He was so gentle, yet so strong. Her arms reached around his waist and they both just sat there, saying nothing, until the rain stopped and it was time to start for home.

When they arrived, he turned to her and said matter of factly, "Enterprise is scheduled to leave at 12 point 45."

"You're going?" She couldn't hide the devastation in her voice.

"Yes."

Tears filled her eyes.

"I thought you'd stay. Are you coming back?"

"It's a five year mission, Leila."

"Five years? That long?... But what about us?" She felt herself start to shake.

He looked at her with dark eyes, and understanding crossed his face. "Oh Leila, I told you! I thought that I had explained that I could not give you everything of me."

She began to sob. He moved closer, unsure how to deal with this Human display of emotion. He took her arm and sat down with her on the sofa.

"Leila, you must listen to me. At home on Vulcan, when I was a child, my father bonded me to a girl he had chosen for me. We will marry when..." He stopped because pon farr was not to be discussed with out-worlders.

Leila was still crying. "I love you," she sobbed.

"I know," he said quietly. "But love is an emotion I am not supposed to feel. Love is not spoken of on Vulcan. A wife is not chosen for that, but for her suitability as a life partner." She heard sadness in his voice.

She turned to him, "Do you love me?"

He didn't answer for a long time.

She repeated the question, determined to get an answer.

"It makes no difference, Leila, for my life partner has been chosen, and there is nothing I can do."

"But Spock, I love you and I feel you do love me. I know we have only known each other such a short time, but I am as sure as I will ever be about anything that I love you."

"Please, do not make this any harder than it is already." He stood up. "I cannot return your feelings. I am truly sorry if I misled you. I did not wish to cause you pain."

The formal Vulcan stood there. Her Spock had been buried beneath a hard mask. She couldn't answer, just buried her face in her hands and cried until long after he had closed the door behind him.

So it had all come to nothing! All her hopes, all her dreams. She couldn't believe that in just five days her ordered life had been turned upside down.

The morning light didn't change anything. She felt empty. What was her life now? She went to work and was met almost at once by a grinning Martin Cassell.

"Hello, I hear your spaceman's ship leaves today. Going to wave goodbye?"

It was like a dagger to her heart. She wasn't sure until this moment what she would do, but now she knew.

"Martin, that job, the one with the botanist Sandoval. Is it still open?"

"Why? Are you going to go after it?" Surprise was in his voice.

"Yes."

"Well if you want it, I'm sure it will be yours. What about Alan?"

"None of your business, Martin," she snapped, and she threw her keys at him. "Here are the keys to the hothouses - and you were right, Martin, I am going to watch the Enterprise leave."

She raced to the space dock and had no trouble finding the Enterprise. The shuttle seemed so tiny in comparison as it passed the huge ship on the way to docking. So this was Spock's home, and would be for the next five years. She was glad she had come. Now when she thought of him she would have a clear idea of where he was.

The last call came across the speakers for the crew of Enterprise. She saw men and women in Starfleet uniforms converging on the entrance to Bay 3, where the giant ship waited.

So many people! She hadn't realised what a large crew manned a starship. Red, gold, blue uniforms passed by.

Knowing Spock, he would probably already be on board, at his post. A hand fell on her shoulder. She spun around and looked into dark eyes.

"Oh, Spock!" She knew she must not cry. Too many of his shipmates were near. "I just had to come and say goodbye." Her eyes were misting over. He too fought to keep a straight face.

"Leila." No-one spoke her name like he did.

She held his hand tightly.

He stared at her, as if committing her face to a special part of his memory. "I have something to give you."

"What is it?"

"Sand."

She stared at him. "Pardon?"

"It is sand from Vulcan. I have kept it with me since I achieved my Kahs Wan. It comes from the Forge. It is special to me." He handed her a tiny paper box. "I wish you to keep it for me."

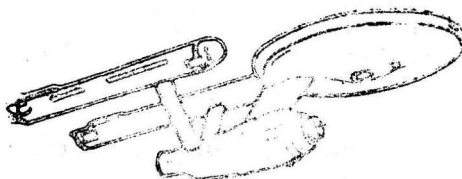
She nodded, unable to speak.

He walked away to join his fellow crew members passing through the docking bay gate. She turned away, tears blinding her eyes, and bumped into a tall ensign rushing to board.

"Sorry," he yelled back to her.

The small box had been knocked out of her hand. Passing feet kicked it out of sight. Particles of red dust scattered across the floor to disappear amongst the milling feet of travellers.

Leila dropped to her knees and tried to rescue the tiny grains, but they had gone... just like Spock.



THE LAMENT OF LIEUTENANT SMITH

(To be sung to "Where Are The Simple Joys Of Maidenhood?" from "Camelot"; with apologies to Lerner and Loewe and thanks to Linda Wood, whose Camelot-based poems - in a more serious vein - inspired it.)

I've made it out! Passed every test!
 I'm serving now beyond the skies
 And as my grades were of the best
 They posted me to Enterprise.
 I like the ship, I like the work as well.
 It would be perfect but as I must tell
 There's one small flaw that blows it west -
 Whenever someone new I meet
 They always start to laugh.
 My parents dear I'd like to beat
 For how my crewmates chaff.
 If they'd just thought when I was born
 If they'd considered then
 I might not grow up all love-lorn
 O'er certain kinds of men.
 It's all their fault - I cannot think
 I am in any way to blame.
 I fear it will drive me to drink
 Oh why did they give me *that* name?
 Why did my parents call me Mary Sue?
 For I'm never in love one little bit.
 I do not pine for Mr. Spock
 Not yet McCoy - now here's a shock
 No man on this ship has made a hit.
 Wish I had some other name, like maybe Koo*
 Mary Sue makes life hell, I'm telling you
 I did not fall for Mr. Scott
 Or Mr. Sulu, not a jot.
 Oh why did my parents call me Mary Sue?
 I don't fancy Chekov, I confess
 No-one in this crew I'd kiss
 I'm not drawn, in variant of K/S
 To Uhura, Miss
 Why did my parents call me Mary Sue?
 It's a name with an image that won't do
 For a girl who, when Captain Kirk
 Comes into view, thinks *What a jerk!*
 So sad that they chose of all
 Girls' names on those to fall.
 Why did my parents call me Mary Sue?

*Thanks to Miss Stark, former recreational facility to HRH Prince Andrew, for a much-needed rhyme.

Kathleen Glancy

COACHES AT MIDNIGHT

by

Sandy Catchick

"Lieutenant Uhura."

"Yes, Captain - " I had to bite off the rest of my reply. You're probably used to hearing me saying "hailing frequencies open". It's almost an instinctive response.

"I wonder if you could spare me some time when we're off duty? I'd like to ask your advice about something."

A lady doesn't turn down an offer like that - leastways not from someone as handsome and sincere as our new Captain. Besides, I was intrigued to know just what he'd want my advice on. I sincerely hoped it had nothing to do with hailing frequencies.

The Captain invited me to join him for a coffee in the Enterprise's garden where we wouldn't be disturbed. It turned out that the advice he wanted was work related. It was on communications of a sort. You can't win them all!

James Kirk had only taken over as Captain a short while ago. It had been a pretty adventurous first assignment, to the barrier at the edge of the galaxy, and it had ended with the deaths of two crewmembers. The Captain took that quite badly. One of the good things to come out of the experience though was a growing understanding between the Captain and our First Officer, Mr. Spock.

I'd served on the Enterprise for some time. I guess I knew Mr. Spock as well as anyone. That wasn't very well. Our First Officer is a Vulcan, or at least half-Vulcan. I've met one or two and as a race they are very polite and reserved. Mr. Spock goes further. He's withdrawn. The very fact that everyone refers to him as "Mr. Spock" is an indication of the awe in which he's held. But there's a personal barrier around him that's almost frightening in its intensity. While I've spoken to him many times on duty, I've never really had a personal conversation with him. I know nothing about his family, his home or even his likes or dislikes, apart from what I've gleaned from observation. It was these observations that Captain Kirk was interested in.

"Uhura, you've known Mr. Spock a long time, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Chris Pike told me that he never attends social gatherings. When Chris held a party or dinner, unless it was an official one, Mr. Spock would be conspicuous by his absence. Is that true of social gatherings generally or just ones the Captain lays on?"

"I've never known Mr. Spock to attend any kind of social event, Captain. But then again, I've never known anyone to invite him."

"Didn't Captain Pike invite him?"

"Captain Pike was always informal about such things. If he threw a party he'd just make a general announcement on the bridge that everyone should be in the rec room or his cabin at a particular time. Mr. Spock never considered himself to be included."

"I want to arrange a get-together of my senior officers. It would be a chance for us to get to know each other better as people. I would like Mr. Spock to come. Can you think of any way we could organise it so that he'd be willing to come?"

"I think it's more a matter of organising it so that he'd feel able to come rather than willing."

"What do you mean?"

"May I be frank, sir? Off the record?"

"I need your help, Uhura. Whatever you tell me will be between the two of us."

"You are the best chance we've got of getting Mr. Spock to a social gathering. I've watched him closely over the years. One thing I've learned is that if you want him to do something you have to be direct. Subtle hints are a waste of breath. If you want him to come you'll have to ask him."

"Is that all?"

"No, Captain, Mr. Spock is very caring of Human sensibilities. He is a keen observer of Human behaviour and he's bright enough to realise that his presence can change that behaviour. While that's unavoidable in duty hours, I've noticed that he goes out of his way to make sure that he does not interfere with people's actions off duty. You've probably noticed that when he gets into the turbolift conversation stops. It's nothing he says or does. His presence just has that effect on people, especially if they don't know him. He realises that. Therefore, if he thinks his presence is going to stop people from enjoying themselves he does the logical thing and removes his presence elsewhere to relieve the tension."

"You've already made more progress with him in the short time you've been aboard than Captain Pike made in years. He likes you, Captain. I think the best way to get him to join in will be to tell him that you'd like him to join in. I think he'd come just to please you."

"If you really want to make it possible for him to do that you'll have to arrange it so that he doesn't think his presence will stop people enjoying themselves."

"Have you got any suggestions?"

"You said you wanted all the senior officers to come. That's a good starting point. If he thinks he should come he'll almost certainly say yes."

"But I don't want to pressurise him into coming if he'd hate it, Uhura. I want him to come because he wants to."

"I don't think Mr. Spock would do anything he didn't want to, unless it was his duty to do so. You'll have to make it clear that it's a personal request rather than an official one but if you issue a formal invitation, with an RSVP, then he'll know he can say yes or

no. That's the simple bit. I think there are other problem areas."

"Such as?"

"If he doesn't know what to wear I think he may hesitate to accept. He might worry about the food. He doesn't eat meat - although he may consider that an insignificant matter. Also I think you'll have to tell him just what is involved. He's never been before and I think he'll be afraid of saying or doing the wrong thing."

"Just how do I tell him all that without making him feel I'm patronising him?"

"I think you'll have to get everyone else to help you. The bridge crew all admire Mr. Spock. Every one of us who's served with him knows that his outer stiffness is just a severe case of Vulcan reserve, and they'd be as keen as you are to help him break down the barriers, even a little."

That's how it all started. The Captain left the details to me. We agreed it would be a fairly formal gathering to take place in the Captain's quarters. We chose those as Spock had been to the Captain's quarters on several occasions and was familiar with them. Also this would be away from the majority of the crew, and he'd probably feel less conspicuous than if he had to go to a party in the rec room. We both agreed that we should keep the numbers down, as too many people would probably scare him off. In the end the Captain decided to invite the bridge crew, the Chief Engineer and the Chief Medical Officer.

The food was easy to arrange. I got Scotty to sort out some Vulcan dishes from the synthesisers, and then we worked out some suitable Human dishes to go with them. We figured no-one would suffer from a vegetarian diet for one evening.

Alcohol was another matter. Scotty was keen to have the usual bottle of whisky in pride of place. I knew that Dr. McCoy, when he rejoined the ship, would want a mint julep or two, and Sulu and Leslie weren't above putting back a glass or two. I wasn't sure about the Captain, but when I discussed this with him he decided to include alcohol on the basis it would enable everyone else to relax, and Spock needn't drink any if he didn't want to. It was my guess that Mr. Spock would have water if he had anything, but we arranged it so that various non-alcoholic drinks would be on display, including some Vulcan fruit juices.

Invitations were carefully designed:-

The Captain requests the pleasure of the company of

.....

at a buffet to be held in his cabin

on Stardate 1324

at 8.00 p.m. for 8.30 p.m.

Light refreshments will be provided

Evening wear or dress uniform

Coaches at midnight

R.S.V.P.

Everyone was told of the reason for the buffet and the Captain's special wish to encourage Mr. Spock to attend. He got everyone's wholehearted support.

The Captain handed out the invitations at the end of the first watch. We planned it so that some people opened theirs right away while others thanked the Captain and said they'd open them later. We weren't too sure of Mr. Spock's reaction but Mr. Leslie and I had a bet on it. I won.

As I'd suspected, curiosity won out. Mr. Spock opened his immediately, carefully withdrawing the card from its envelope without tearing it.

"I don't understand, Captain," he said after a slight hesitation.

Kirk grinned boyishly and waved the two invitations he had left in his hand.

"I've decided to hold a little party in my cabin, Mr. Spock. Just the bridge crew and one or two senior officers. I want everyone to have the chance to meet each other outside of work so we can all know each other better. I would very much like to you come. I shall ensure there is Vulcan food and drink available and I would not ask you to do anything you'd find embarrassing."

Poor Mr. Spock. I could tell he was already embarrassed. But, as I'd thought, the Captain's pleasure at the thought of Spock attending, and his personal invitation, did the trick. Mr. Spock gave the matter his full attention.

"Are you sure you wish me to attend, Captain?"

"Illogical, Mr. Spock. If I didn't wish you to attend I would not have given you an invitation with your name on it. You are a member of this bridge crew and it is customary for a new Captain to throw a party for those working closely with him. If there is a Vulcan ethic against such a custom I shall of course understand."

"There is no such custom on Vulcan, Captain, so there is no guidance on the subject."

"Good. Then you'll attend."

"That is not possible. I am on duty between - "

"No, Mr. Spock. I'm making special arrangements for the back-up crew to man the bridge. Whether you accept or not, you will not be on duty at that time."

That was one thing I hadn't thought of, and I knew for a fact that Kirk hadn't either. But improvisation was clearly our new Captain's speciality. He lied like a trooper; fluently and with style. I made a mental note to warn the second shift.

"I've done all I can to ensure everyone here can attend. I'd especially like you to attend. Will you accept?"

"If you wish it, Captain."

"I wish it, Mr. Spock, but do you?"

"I shall be honoured to accept, Captain."

"Then I'll take that as a positive reply and I'll look forward to seeing you tomorrow evening."

"Yes, Captain."

That should have been that. But the best laid plans of mice and men... Although I'd thought to issue an invitation to Doctor McCoy, who'd rejoined the ship when we'd docked at Starbase 21, in all the excitement I'd forgotten to explain to him just why we were having the party. And of course the Doctor had missed seeing the developing friendship between Mr. Spock and the Captain. If only I'd thought...

That, coupled with a minor policy dispute in Engineering that required the Captain's presence and delayed his arrival at the party, meant that Doctor McCoy and Mr. Spock were the first to arrive.

Afterwards, the Doctor recounted the conversation they'd had.

"I might have guessed you'd arrive exactly on time, Mr. Spock," he told the Vulcan in his usual half-battle stance.

"Indeed."

"But you got it wrong this time, didn't you?"

"Got it wrong, Doctor?"

"Don't play the puzzled fool with me, Spock. You made an error. The invitation said 8.00 for 8.30 p.m. You're supposed to arrive somewhere between the two, not exactly on 8.00. So you got it wrong."

"I had wondered why we were the only people here."

"Jim should be here. It's his duty as host."

"The Captain was detained by a minor matter in Engineering."

"Humph."

"Pardon?"

"Never mind. Would you care for a bite?"

"A bite?"

"Stop repeating everything I say, Spock. Would you like something to eat?"

"I am not hungry."

"That's not the point. At a party you don't eat because you are hungry. You eat because it is polite."

"I see. In that case I shall partake of something to eat."

The Doctor spotted a Vulcan dish and offered some to Spock.

"If it is acceptable I should prefer to sample some of your Human dishes, Doctor."

"Sure thing, Spock. How about a quiche?"

"Which dish is that?"

"They're the little round things. They're made of egg and cheese on a pastry base. This green one's probably spinach quiche."

"That will be quite satisfactory."

The Doctor helped himself and gave Spock a piece.

"Something to drink?"

"Thank you, no."

"Come on, Spock. Don't be a party pooper."

"I have no wish to repeat what you just told me, Doctor, but I do not understand."

Sigh.

"A party pooper is someone whose aim is to spoil the party."

"That was not my intention."

"Then have something to drink."

"A glass of water, then, if you please."

Sighhhhhhh.

The Doctor handed Spock a glass of water. He got impatient waiting for someone else to join them. The prospect of talking to Mr. Spock alone for the next thirty minutes was rather daunting. In order to say something he turned to the invitation.

"Kind of strange to get an invitation like that, wouldn't you say, Spock?"

"I would not know, Doctor."

"It's not like Jim to be so formal. I mean, RSVP and coaches at midnight."

"What exactly does that mean, Doctor?"

"Would you stop calling me 'Doctor'."

"What would you wish me to call you?"

"McCoy, or Bones."

"As you wish. You explained the significance of 8.00 for 8.30. What does RSVP mean?"

"That's the French version of 'please reply'. It means you should formally accept the invitation or formally reject it."

"Of course."

"Pardon?"

"I should have realised, "Repondez S'il Vous Plait". My knowledge of Earth languages is limited, but French and Latin phrases are frequently used in the vernacular. What will happen at midnight? I do not see how the Captain will be able to get a coach into his cabin with all the senior officers present."

The Doctor laughed.

"It's you and I that have to provide the coaches, not the Captain."

"I do not have a coach."

"You don't provide a real coach. In the old days, back in Georgia, they used to hold formal dinner parties. The ladies and gentlemen would arrive at the party by coach and horses. The driver would take the coach away and water and feed the horses and return with the coach at the set time to collect them from the party. Nowadays we forget about the coach and horses, but we still say what time the party's going to be over. It just gives everyone an idea of what to expect. Usually parties go overtime, but not by too much."

"I have never understood the Human penchant for ignoring time."

"Perhaps that's because you've got a built-in clock. Us mere mortals have to look at a watch."

"That is a possibility I had not considered."

"I wouldn't waste too much time on it."

The Doctor looked pointedly at his watch. Only a few minutes had passed. He was running out of conversation topics.

"Tell me, Mr. Spock, why did you have to wear dress uniform?"

"Dress uniform was indicated on the invitation, Doctor."

"Of course it was. So were a coach and horses but you won't see anyone at the party with them. Trust you to opt for the formal approach."

"It is the only approach I know."

"Well that might be O.K. on Vulcan, but we're not on Vulcan now. This is a 99% Human ship and you've been on it long enough to know something of Human customs."

"Incorrect."

"I'm right, Spock. If you want to serve with Humans you've got to at least try and fit in with them and understand them."

"I was referring to your statistics. This is a 99 point - "

"You're missing the point, Spock. I'm not talking about statistics, I'm talking about you. About Vulcans and Humans living and working together."

"Indeed. I am listening, Doctor."

"McCoy, Spock, not Doctor."

"I am listening, McCoy."

"You just don't make any effort to meet us half-way. Take this party. Only you would turn up to something like this in uniform. I bet you'll be the only person here in dress uniform. What's worse is that because you're in dress uniform some of the others, especially the young ones like Sulu, will feel that you've got your eye on them. They won't be able to relax and enjoy themselves because they'll be wondering if you're watching them and marking them down for some stupid, Human thing they've done at the party. The whole time you stand there in uniform with that grim look on your face they'll be reminded of duty and work and they'll be unable to let their hair down. And before you ask me what that means, I'll tell you. It means they'll be so frightened of doing something wrong because you're watching that they won't be able to just be themselves. So because of your inability to unbend a little, they'll spend this evening talking about work in whispers instead of having a good time."

"I assure you that was not my intention, McCoy."

"No?"

"The Captain made it clear that he intended to use this occasion as an opportunity for members of the bridge crew to get to know each other better. I have no wish to get in the way of that objective. If you would excuse me, Doctor. Please tender my apologies to the Captain."

Mr. Spock was out of the door before McCoy could stop him. Of course the Doctor felt guilty for the things he'd said, not really intended to make Spock leave. But he hadn't realised that Jim had set up the party for Spock. He didn't wait long to find out.

Kirk and Scotty arrived at the party together and I wasn't long behind them. I had on my dress uniform. I wanted to make sure Mr. Spock was not the only one in uniform. Doctor McCoy nearly choked when he saw me.

"What gives with everyone?"

"In what way, Doctor?"

"Don't you start, Uhura. I mean why is everyone in dress uniform tonight?"

I looked pointedly around the room. The Captain was wearing a lounge suit. Scotty, bless him, was wearing his kilt and Bones himself was dressed in a dashing white suit with a blue cravat tied loosely around his neck.

The Doctor had the grace to flush. "What I mean is, how come anyone is wearing dress uniform, given the option?"

I didn't get a chance to reply as Mr. Sulu interrupted to offer us some rice wine. The conversation turned to other things and slowly the room filled up until everyone was crowded around the table, food and drink in hand, chatting away.

Only one figure moved slowly around the room, saying a quick good evening to each guest and moving on. Each time there was a pause, he'd have his eyes riveted on the door. It did not open magically. At last James T. Kirk came to stand next to us.

"He's not coming, is he?"

"I'm sorry, Captain. I really thought he would. It's not like him to accept and then not turn up."

"Who're we talking about?" That was McCoy.

"He only made a verbal reply. Perhaps he didn't think of that as acceptance. Somehow I thought he'd have written. One or two of the others wrote. They said it was in the spirit of the invitation."

"I don't think so, Captain. It's not like him to say something and not do it."

"You're right, of course, but it's not like him to be late either."

"Hey. If you two let me get a word in edgewise, I'll tell you. Mr. Spock's already been. He was here exactly on time, of course, but he's gone and he asked me to tender his apologies."

"Oh, no!"

"Bones, it's my fault. I shouldn't have gone to Engineering. I should have been here to meet him. It never occurred to me that he might not wait."

"He'd have waited, Jim. Patience is one of his strong suits, if you'll pardon the pun. But I made him realise this was supposed to be a fun occasion and his turning up in full dress uniform and giving everyone that supercilious Vulcan stare of his wasn't going to contribute much."

"You did what?!?"

"Easy, Jim. I just made him see that he has to meet us half way. You'd have thought after all these years on the Enterprise he'd know that dress uniform was the worst thing to wear to a gathering like this. It's no wonder folks are scared stiff of him. I'd have thought that someone with his intelligence would have known what to wear and how to behave by now."

That was when I burst into tears. It's not my normal reaction. I'm pretty tough most of the time. It was just that I'd put so much effort into organising this party and ensuring that Mr. Spock would feel comfortable at it. Everyone knew the reason for the invitations, the uniforms, the food. I thought I'd thought of every eventuality, excepting the good Doctor. As he'd been away I hadn't spoken to him at the time, and I'd forgotten to let him in on our secret. I couldn't help myself. I felt frustrated and let down and worst of all I felt guilty of letting the Captain down. I'd seen the hurt on his face when Doctor McCoy told him what he'd told Spock.

I ran blindly from the room. As I moved along the corridor

away from the Captain's quarters, I started bumping into some of the off-duty crew. I was a senior officer. I couldn't let them see me like this. Nor could I bear the thought of going back to my quarters. As a last resort, thinking of somewhere I could quietly cry myself out, I ran into the observation lounge. It was occupied.

Mr. Spock had been looking out of the viewport at the stars. I knew he was startled by the speed with which he turned round, but he covered it well.

"Uhura?"

It wasn't much. Just a single, little word. The tone was deep and uninflected. But I'd learned to read Mr. Spock enough to recognise the slightest innuendo. There was a wealth of concern in the way he said my name.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Spock."

He looked at the tears running down my face, and under his direct gaze they began to run afresh.

"If you would prefer me to retire... "

He was already half way to the door.

"No!" I shouted the word, and he swung back towards me, startled for a second time. It wasn't like Mr. Spock to be so easily rattled, and I realised that he too must be upset. Dr. McCoy's thoughtless words, no doubt. I'd always known that cool exterior was a front.

"Don't go, Mr. Spock. You see, you are the reason for my tears."

That got to him. He froze. Then he blinked once.

"Explain."

"You let me down. Worse still, you let the Captain down."

"That was not my intention. Dr. McCoy has already explained. I did not wish to inhibit the crew in any way. I have no desire to stop them enjoying themselves."

"I'm not talking about the crew, Mr. Spock. The Captain wasn't worried about the crew. I'm sorry. It's not your fault. It's not really Dr. McCoy's fault, either. It's just that he sometimes speaks without thinking, and this time, because I didn't fill him in, he put his foot right in it."

"I am finding your conversation difficult to follow, Lieutenant. What has Dr. McCoy's foot to do with the situation?"

I smiled through the tears. I suspect that he made the comment with just that purpose in mind. His sense of timing is more acute than people give him credit for.

"This party. It was the Captain's idea. He wanted this party so that YOU would get to know the other members of the bridge crew. I don't know how, but he discovered that you'd never been to a party in all the years you've served on the Enterprise. He asked my advice on how to go about inviting you. I spent hours - days -

working out a plan. I thought I'd covered every eventuality and the Captain was so pleased that he'd persuaded you to accept. Then the good Doctor, knowing nothing of this, drives you away before the party's even started. In effect he told you to butt out."

"Those were not his exact words."

"No, but you're here, aren't you? You're not at the party."

"The Doctor was concerned that I would not be able to unbend enough to socialise. He is correct."

"Oh, but Mr. Spock, you've got to start somewhere. The fact that you went to the party at all is a step in the right direction. The dress uniform was my idea. I thought you'd find it easier to accept. I've really messed things up, haven't I? I truly am sorry."

"There is no need to apologise, Lieutenant. In fact, I am grateful to you for attempting to make me feel at ease."

"But I've failed."

"That is not so."

"The Captain so wanted you to be at the buffet to meet everyone socially and get to know them. The Doctor accused you of spoiling our fun. Now he's spoiled the Captain's fun. The Captain is furious with him."

"Without justification. The Doctor was quite correct."

"No, he wasn't, Mr. Spock. He didn't know that this was your first party."

"That is true. He was most enlightening. I had not understood the significance of the reply nor of coaches at midnight. The Doctor made a valid point. Now I fully understand the Captain's intention I must agree that dress uniform is not appropriate. Come."

When Spock says come in that commanding voice of his, you just obey. Before I knew it I'd walked with him along the corridor.

"Where are we going?"

"To your cabin."

"Why?"

"If I may quote from one of my mother's books I read as a boy, you, Lieutenant, are going to the ball."

"I am?"

"Indeed. Be ready in five minutes."

When I peeked out of my quarters five minutes later, Spock was waiting. It was my turn to do a double take. He was dressed in a black shirt and black baggy trousers which were tucked into knee-high boots, and he looked stunning. He held out an arm to me. I took it hesitantly, aware of his dislike of being touched.

He looked down at me and said gently, "You and the Captain have gone to a great deal of trouble on my behalf, Lieutenant. I have no wish to disappoint either of you. Shall we go?"

We went.

James Kirk's face was a picture!

"Spock, you came!"

An eyebrow was raised.

"Naturally, Captain. I did accept your invitation. I apologise for my late arrival. The Doctor explained the intricacies of your most gracious invitation and I found it necessary to change my apparel accordingly."

James T. smiled in full appreciation. Dr. McCoy's mouth hung open. "I owe you an apology, Mr. Spock. You should have told me it was your first party. I'd never have said what I did if I'd known. But I approve of your alternative to dress uniform. Is it a Vulcan outfit?"

"No, Doctor. My mother purchased it on a visit to Mexico."

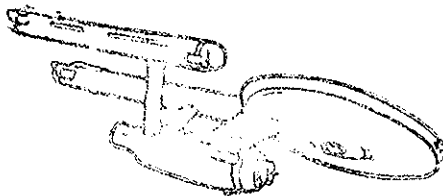
"Well, I'll be a... "

"I shall be interested to learn the meaning of that expression too, Doctor. I could perhaps give you the Vulcan equivalent. It was your advice that I should meet you half way."

Not a muscle twitched on that inexpressive Vulcan face, but my own smile was in response to the relaxation of the taut muscles under my hand, which still rested on Mr. Spock's arm.

The Captain's smile broadened into an expansive grin and I knew that all the work and heartache that had gone into the evening had been worth it. His eyes sought and held Mr. Spock's in a personal, non-verbal communication even I could not interpret. But I agreed wholeheartedly when he finally spoke.

"Well met, Mr. Spock."



Logic

To spend my life
by the side of a legend -
Never parted, yet always apart...
As his wife
I would have had honour and power;
I would have been in control of his house, but never his heart.

His heart and his mind
would still be with the stars,
and with that friend of his
who holds his soul.
Spock may not know it himself
but his life is the stars and his love the man by his side.

He would always be out there
leaving for me only the all-consuming fires of pon farr,
without the warming beauty of living with the bondmate.
My life would pass in waiting,
Alone in my darkest hours...
And when home, he'd long to be free again.

Spock, maybe I have understood you better
than you can understand yourself.
For years I have watched and observed,
The forgotten betrothed of the legend;
Apart, but never parted,
I could see what you yourself cannot.

I had no choice, I had to do what I did.
When you brought the Human to our ceremony
it became clear to me that you value his friendship
much more than your Vulcan blood.
So I chose him my champion, for it was the only way
to show you what you really feel.

Spock, you never understood me
and you will not now...
I became chattel, yet I am more Stonn's equal
than I could ever have been yours.
Your needs are so different from mine...
And I was not the one to fulfil them.

A wife would have tied you to Vulcan,
More than your father and tradition ever could.
I knew that this was not what you wanted.
I gave my pride and my honour
and sacrificed my freedom
so that we both could have peace of mind.

Bettina Rackel

DEATH ON THE SAND

by

Sheryl Peterson

"Jim!" A prayer, a cry of anguish that seems to go on forever in the vacuum within my heart, till my very senses throb with the intensity of my need.

"Jim?" I stare at you, still unbelieving, as I call your name again in my mind, pleading now for a look, a word, anything... But it is as if I had cried out to infinite space, and must wait infinitely for an answer I can never understand.

You are dead!

I still cannot encompass the full meaning of it. As if frozen by that shouted 'Kroykah!' I hang motionless, crouched over you like a beast at its prey, my hands on the ahn woon that robbed you of life. Did my Iirpa also draw the blood on your chest?

I awake from the madness of Pon Farr, to the even greater insanity of despair - and death. The sash of combat brands me as combatant, and therefore murderer; murderer of you, my Captain and my friend - and of myself - for without you I shall not live.

Oh, I will still walk and breathe, but somewhere deep within my hidden corridors of self - that mystic labyrinth wherein you, like Theseus of old-Earth legend, ventured alone like some curious child, seeking to find my Minotaur of logic and emotion - there Death will hold sway, for there I shall bury myself again, finally, for all time.

It will be all I have left. You shall never come again, you who, alone of all people, of all races, sought carefully enough to find my hiding place, yet did not destroy it by senseless prying, content to beg patient entrance, till, one by one, my walls fell before you, and I learned, as I had never dared to hope I could, the meaning of friendship as Humans know it.

If I had known it would mean your death, I would have driven you from me forever when we first met, and yet...

You fascinated me. How else could you have led me from my labyrinth, like a boy coaxing a lost animal from its refuge, showing me life as I had not dared let myself imagine it? And though I retreated to my own sanctuary of Vulcan self when others came, I knew you were always waiting there to guide, to show me your world, to be a friend in a way no Vulcan had been before.

Yes, Jim, you were my friend. Now for that you lie dead at my feet, while the other, the scalpel-tongued Doctor, whom I also, yet more cautiously, admitted to my sanctuary, pushes me away with eyes and words filled with loathing, that show no mercy for me - and no hope for you.

I turn away, my shame more painful than the ravages of Pon

Farr, which I would welcome now to cloak my mind against horror. But the nightmare I thought I only dreamed has not been exorcised by the harsh light of reality.

Madness has only been replaced by another madness.

My Human half wants to clasp you to my breast, and shed burning tears to ease the anguish that destroys me from within.

But I am Vulcan.

Fatally and forever - Vulcan.

And here, in this place of my ancestors, this place of marriage and challenge, and, even more bitter, death; under the eyes of those who judge me most harshly of all, I cannot break.

The Minotaur must once more barricade its tortured soul inside the labyrinth of its own making, throwing down the walls behind it, so no other youthful Theseus may lay it naked to this agony again.

I would that I lay there in your place, my Jim, but it is too late. I walk away, not looking back, Vulcan in every inch of my stride.

Vulcan is a merciless mother. She must have all her people can give. It was not enough that I was denied my birthright and branded alien on my own world; now she must claim you from me also, you who showed me other ways, and what it meant to 'feel'.

I take off the sash of combat - would that with it, I could cast off my anguish. Why? Why did you fight me for T'Pring, whom you did not know, and could not possibly want?

Mine the bonding that drove me into battle, but you - what stake did you have, to accept that challenge? Or was it another bonding - to me? I should never have brought you here; risked your Human fragility against the cruelty that is Vulcan, but I was more alone than I had ever been before - and afraid.

I needed you near me. Even McCoy, with his acid tongue, was a link to that other, secretly cherished, life. I felt almost safe.

But now I have lost him too. He comes to me, as if to an enemy, to tell me bitterly that, by my own hand, I am now Captain, asking for orders as if the words burn his tongue. I give them mechanically. I would as soon pronounce my own death sentence.

He turns from me, as though escaping, to take leave of T'Pau, before the transporter takes back its own. She says she grieves with him, and perhaps he believes it more easily of her than of me, yet there is no pity in her heart.

Even the Plak Tow, the burning fever of it consuming my body, could not prevent my begging for your life. I would have crawled at her feet if she had demanded. But her shock was not the doorway to pity. She condemned us both - you to death, me to a living death.

I am Vulcan.

T'Pau herself surely cannot doubt my blood now.

But the price is too much to pay.

McCoy and the body of Kirk vanish into nothingness, and I turn to T'Pol, who watches it all as if it had been a play, staged at her command. She is mine now by right of conquest, but my madness is gone and I am empty. I care nothing for anything Vulcan can offer now.

When I demand of her the reason for choosing Kirk, she tells me as calmly as a chess master would explain a move. She is a true daughter of Vulcan indeed, but she will bear no sons for my line. I give to Stonn only what was already his, and escape in my turn.

The time I fear most is at hand.

Vulcan has no place for me now. I must return to the Enterprise for what may well be my last time.

I go to T'Pol to take leave of her, for I may never come back here either. Our eyes meet, but I cannot read what hides behind hers - either pride or pity, and if she reads what is in mine, she does not speak of it.

"Live Long and Prosper, Spock," she says like a benediction, but the words fall into the well of my heart like the careless stones of a child, thrown without thought and lost forever in emptiness.

"I shall do neither. I have killed my Captain - and my friend."

My words are like the curse of a lonely ghost, doomed to know no peace, and she nods as if finally understanding what she and I have done today, in this place of our fathers.

I turn away from her - and with her, Vulcan.

On the spot where Jim lay dead, I brace myself for what is to come as the hot breath of Vulcan enfolds me like a shroud.

I am once more controlled.

The madness of Pon Farr dead - buried under a grief that shall be everlasting.

I reach for my communicator. Strange how it feels more heavy in my hand than the tempered metal of the lirpa - and even more deadly, for with this I go to face a worse fate.

"Energize," I order tonelessly.

There is a familiar humming as far away in space the transporters of the Enterprise stir into life and, all unmindful of my treachery, stretch powerful arms to gather me in - to take me 'home'.

The humming increases.

I feel the indescribable, yet aching familiar, sensation of being slowly sundered into molecules. And I wish, for the first time, with almost Human bitterness, that I could remain that way forever.

But I must bury my dead.

In the last second before the transporter claims me for its own, my thoughts spear towards the waiting starship... and the man who loved us both.

"Jim. I come. Wait for me."

FACES PAST AND PRESENT

"What is this place? Who am I?" my mind seems to cry;
A woman stands before me, I cannot tell you why.
A man is standing with her, they say that I had died -
But how can this be possible when I am still alive?

*The ground begins to tremble,
And then begins to shake;
With pain I well remember -
I cry out in its wake.*

*My body four times, five times changes;
my bones and organs do comply;
This planet itself rearranges;
With it I seem doomed to die.*

*Three others to our rest place enter;
Violent, brutal are their ways.
The woman said in even temper,
"His planet will be dead in days."*

*Pain and terror do consume me -
Changes do too quickly come.
The man's death does not affect me;
A voice claims that it was his son.*

*Darkness, blackness, unforbidding
Claim me, am I now undone.
Time and motion unforgiving
To wake beneath a different sun.*

Memories, names, facts and faces
Flood my memory at her touch.
Missions, planets, ships and places
Friends that always meant so much.

Past a group of staring people -
Hope is written in their eyes.
Slowly turning, fingers steepled -
Bated breath is their reply.

Questions asked and answers given
Stir visions happy, but some grim.
Recognition finally glistens -
I turn around and call him Jim.

Much retraining is required,
Facts and figures learned in block.
To return to them and not retire -
But only when I am their Spock.

"...THE BEST OF TIMES ... THE WORST OF TIMES..."

(Ch. Dickens)

by

Nicole Comtet

It was a beautiful morning, still cool from the night. As Amanda looked out of the window, she could make out the distant L'langon mountain range silhouetted against the red sky, and long shadows casting purple stripes over the gold and crimson sandy plain.

Epsilon Eridani was barely above the horizon, and the garden below looked fresh and inviting, peaceful after the cold wind of dawn. Amanda decided to spend a couple of hours tending her garden, before the fierce glare of the Vulcan sun forced her to remain indoors.

Sarek, her husband, had just left for ShiKahr, and would not come back until evening, so she had the day to herself. She put on a casual dress, tied her gardening apron tightly about herself, picked up her straw hat, and walking briskly along the vaulted gallery of the patio then by the pool, she entered her domain.

The garden looked its best in the morning light; sweet scents wafted up around her as she walked along the sandy path to her little rose garden. Amanda was indeed proud of the roses she had had sent over at great expense from Earth, along with special soil and fertilizer. There they were, in full bloom, their colour and sweet fragrance attracting the covert admiration of the neighbourhood.

After taking some time to enjoy the sight of her flowers, Amanda busied herself weeding, pruning faded flowers, fixing branches to the trellis, and, from time to time, straightening up to ease her back and listen to the soft warble of a Vulcan thrush perched on the tree nearby.

Suddenly a moan escaped her lips, and she slowly slumped down on her knees, pressing her hands to her brow. She was the prey of a pain so sudden and so acute that tears welled up in her eyes - a pain which seemed to bore into her brain like fire, a strange feeling of agony, of despair such as she had never experienced before.

For a few seconds she could hardly breath, and then, as suddenly as they had come, the symptoms disappeared, leaving her faint and white as a sheet. She managed to stand, then struggled over to sit on the stone garden-seat, under a vine bower.

What happened to me? she thought, never before have I felt such agony... What is wrong with me?

Then an alarming idea crossed her mind: Sarek? Could this have something to do with Sarek? The bond which linked them since their marriage enabled them to sense each other's feelings or pain even from afar.

Quite worried now, Amanda got to her feet, and still feeling

rather weak, walked slowly back to the house; and she saw T'Reela coming to meet her. It had been three years since this young woman, a member of Sarek's powerful clan, had joined their household as companion and housekeeper, after the death of old T'Mina who was still sorely missed by the family.

"I don't feel very well," Amanda told her. "It must be the heat. I am going to lie down for a while. Bring me a cup of tea, will you, T'Reela?"

Before going to her room, however, she went to Sarek's study, sat down by the video-com, and called the Vulcan Academy. The attendant, whose calm quietened her somehow, informed Amanda that her husband had already left, having been called away.

No, she did not know where he had gone; yes, Sarek appeared to be in perfect health, and no, nothing unusual had occurred, so far as she knew.

Puzzled, but somehow comforted, Amanda went to her room, and having changed into a loose robe, lay on her bed, feeling exhausted. When the Vulcan girl came in quietly with a cup of fragrant herb tea, Amanda gratefully sipped the hot drink. She was feeling better now, but strangely enough there was still that anxious feeling nagging at the back of her mind that, somehow, there was something amiss... and it made her uneasy.

With a sigh she set the cup down, and idly picked up a letter from the bedside table; the last letter from Spock, her son, Captain in Starfleet, which had arrived a few days ago. Spock's letters were always received with mild excitement in Sarek's home. In these days of subspace transmissions, Amanda and her son were conservative enough to keep this habit of letter-writing, a tradition brought from Earth by Amanda, a former teacher, and which she had introduced in her Vulcan family.

Amanda read for the tenth time the long letter, smiling at the formal way Spock penned his missives. He was about to leave with his cadets for a training cruise of five weeks, on board the Enterprise. He said that on the whole he was satisfied with the trainees, and Amanda was amused by his comments on the success of Saavik, his ward, who had just graduated from the Command Training School at the Academy. Spock for all his Vulcan restraint, sounded like any proud father.

Well, she reflected with some complacency, here, at least, is a trait Spock took after me. He certainly has a gift for teaching.

After mentioning that both Admiral Kirk and Dr. McCoy sent their best regards to his parents, Spock signed as usual: "Your respectful and affectionate son". With a contented sigh, Amanda folded the letter, and, closing her eyes, began to make plans for the next month, when her son would come home on leave, and finally drifted into sleep.

It was a sudden sensation of panic which made Amanda wake up with a start. She cried out, and felt a hand softly touch her brow. Sarek was standing by her bed, a dark figure against the dim light filtering through the window screens. She held out her hand.

"Sarek? You have already returned... or did I oversleep?"

"It is not late yet," replied her husband, sitting by her side. "I heard that you have been unwell?"

"Well, the most curious thing happened. Some time ago, in the garden, I had the strangest feeling of a searing pain, and all but fainted. For a moment I feared something had happened to you - and then, as suddenly as it had come, the pain was gone."

"When was that?" Sarek asked in a tight voice.

"About an hour after you had left, I believe," Amanda replied.

"Ah - that was when I heard..." Sarek's voice broke and, leaning forward, he rested his forehead on his tightly gripped hands.

Amanda sat up, puzzled and frightened. "What is the matter, my dear? What did you hear? Look at me, please!"

He slowly raised his head, and let her see his face, so self-assured usually, ravaged with grief. Amanda was so shocked that she could only whisper, "My God, Sarek, what is it? Tell me!"

There was a painful pause, then the Vulcan, his voice now tightly controlled, spoke. "This morning, when I was at the Academy, I was called to my office where an urgent message from Starfleet awaited me." (Amanda caught her breath). "The message read: The U.S.S. Enterprise has been engaged in battle in the quadrant of Regulus II. Heavy casualties among the crew. Ship in crippled condition." Sarek stopped, took a deep breath, then went on: "Captain Spock reported killed during the action."

"No! Oh, no!" faltered Amanda. Sarek quickly caught her in his arms, and for a moment they remained locked together in their grief, Amanda softly sobbing on her husband's shoulder. Presently she raised her head and stammered,

"Oh, Sarek, when was that? Are you sure? It could be a mistake, a false rumour, couldn't it? Remember how often Spock, the Enterprise, have been reported missing... Remember when Spock was lost, prisoner of the Klingons - and he came back. Maybe they are mistaken?"

"Not this time, my wife. It is illogical to nurse false hope. Starfleet Command would not send me a special message if they were not certain of the facts. But I have sent a priority call to Captain Sonorak. He works at Starfleet Headquarters, remember - he was aide to Nogura before the Admiral's retirement. If there is any development, he will be informed, and he will let me know immediately. The call is to be forwarded here. There is nothing to do now but wait, and prepare ourselves for any eventuality."

Amanda shivered uncontrollably, and picking up Spock's letter that had dropped on her lap, she absent-mindedly folded it carefully and whispered, "I can't believe it. It is impossible - my son..."

Sarek looked sadly at her. "It is quite possible, unfortunately, Amanda. We must face it, and accept the fact that Spock may be dead. Life is dangerous in deep space. Somehow we have taken for granted that he would always come through, whatever happened, but we had to expect that one day he might not return."

Though unwillingly, Amanda had to agree with her husband's

remark; then a thought crossed her mind, and holding up Spock's letter she said,

"There is something I cannot understand. Spock told us that he was going on a five weeks' manoeuvres cruise with his class. How can you explain that Star Fleet would engage in battle a ship manned by children? It does not make sense, does it?"

"I agree," Sarek replied quietly. "It sounds quite illogical. But we do not know all the facts, and until we receive more data, it is useless to speculate on what might have happened. I have in mind, however, a most important matter. Assuming the worst - that Spock is dead - the situation may not be totally hopeless. His essence may still live if he has been able to transmit his katra into another mind. But did he have the time? Was there somebody prepared to receive it? There was no Vulcan on board, I think, unless Saavik...? But there is no point in speculation."

For the best part of the day Sarek and his wife remained at home, waiting for news. When Sarek retired for meditation in his study Amanda wandered restlessly around house and garden, or sat in the living room, sorting and reading again the letters from Spock.

They sat down for the midday meal, but neither could eat anything. The servants attended in silence, as usual, but a certain tension could be felt among them, and T'Reela, though impassive, had a stricken expression in her dark eyes. Amanda was well aware that the young woman nursed a secret admiration for Spock. She had observed with some amusement how T'Reela watched him unobtrusively when he was at home. Now the poor girl could hardly conceal her distress.

As the day drew to a close Amanda exhausted by the worry and the waiting, went to the garden, and was sitting in the shade of the vine bower when Sarek sent for her. A call was coming in from Star Fleet. She hastily joined her husband, and both sat down to watch the screen of the com. unit, their hearts thumping painfully.

After the usual delay the sober face of Captain Sonorak, an old friend of Sarek, appeared on the screen, looking very grave. The ritual salutes delivered, he declared that Admiral Nogura, who had retired but still retained some activities at H.Q., wished to speak to Sarek personally. After a short pause, the old face of the Admiral, drawn with concern, came into view.

"Ambassador Sarek, you have already been apprised of the news, I know. This is an appalling tragedy. We have just had the confirmation by a brief report from Jim Kirk, who is currently bringing the Enterprise back to space dock."

"Excuse me, Admiral," Sarek intervened, "but are you saying that Admiral Kirk is on board the Enterprise? We had been told that our son had left for a training cruise with his cadets."

"So he did, Ambassador, so he did. But Kirk and Dr. McCoy were on the voyage, a special training session for the end of the term. Alas! Who could have imagined what was in store for them? The Enterprise was attacked by surprise near Regulus by an unidentified enemy who previously had captured our scientific vessel the Reliant, and unfortunately suffered considerable damage."

"You mention Regulus, Admiral," Sarek pointed out. "I am rather out of touch now, but isn't there a base in that area where a team of scientists is conducting some very important research?"

"Quite right," replied Nogura, looking slightly embarrassed. "Top secret research, actually. So far as we know, the Regulus base was attacked by these outlaws, the Enterprise intercepted their call for help, and received orders to go and investigate, since they were in that quadrant. And this is where they were treacherously attacked, and suffered many casualties. As for the exact circumstances of Captain Spock's death, it seems that the enemy fire caused such a havoc on the ship that, for all the efforts of the engineering team, she was reduced to impulse power. The warp engines had sustained major damage, and repairs had to be delayed because of a dangerous radioactive leak in the reactor room.

"And this is where, Ambassador, Captain Spock sacrificed his life in order to save the ship and his crew. Kirk told me that Spock went into the radiation chamber, and succeeded in surviving in the lethal atmosphere long enough to put the warp drive back on line, and therefore saved the ship from utter destruction. But it cost him his life, Sarek; Kirk saw him die a few minutes later."

A moment of silence followed, dense with emotion. Sarek, stricken by Nogura's words, remained frozen, eyes closed. Amanda was crying softly by his side. Then the Vulcan straightened, and said in a strained voice, "We are grateful, Admiral, for the explanation you have given us. In our sorrow, it is a comfort to know that our son did his duty to the very end."

"Ambassador," Nogura declared emphatically, "what your son did was beyond the call of duty. He sacrificed his life. We all sorely mourn the loss of Captain Spock. He was an outstanding officer, a superior mind. He had become quite a legend in the Federation, along with Kirk and the Enterprise. He was also a remarkable instructor to our cadets. He will be missed in the Fleet. Let me assure you that we all share in your bereavement. If there is anything we can do, do not hesitate to let us know. You will probably come to Earth for... ah... " Here, Nogura hesitated, as he was not quite sure of the rituals of Vulcan funerals.

Sarek, outwardly composed but secretly moved by this eulogy from such an exalted person as Admiral Nogura, replied quietly,

"Yes, indeed. I intend to leave for Earth today, and bring my son back to Vulcan as soon as possible. Shall I be allowed to obtain more data and records on these events?"

"By all means, Ambassador. Sonorak here will be at your entire disposal. Please, convey my condolences to your wife and family for this terrible loss... My deep regards, Ambassador. Goodbye."

Admiral Nogura faded away, to be replaced by the Vulcan Captain. Briefly, an appointment was fixed, words of sympathy given, then the communication was cut, and the screen went blank.

Sarek stood up slowly and led Amanda to the inner garden, made her sit down in her armchair, and waited patiently while she composed herself. He felt numb with grief, but his duty to his wife, and to the memory of his son, obliged him to keep a tight control on his feelings. Presently, Amanda wiped her tears, and

looking up at Sarek, managed a pitiful smile.

"That was a beautiful tribute from Starfleet, wasn't it? But... oh, Sarek...I can't realize it is all over...our son gone, burned in a radiation chamber. It is so cruel, so unfair!"

"Amanda, please consider. Spock made a conscious decision; he made the sacrifice of his life willingly, logically, to save his ship."

"My God, Sarek!" his wife exclaimed. "How can you see any logic in the death of your son? Why did he have to go in there? Couldn't they repair the engines by means of some machinery, some robot, if it was so dangerous?"

"They certainly had already done their utmost, my wife - you heard the Admiral. The situation was desperate, and Spock took his decision with logic; the lives of the children, of his friends, were at stake, and he did not hesitate. I tell you, he made a deliberate choice."

Amanda shook her head sadly. "Forgive the revolt of a mother. I am only Human, as you are well aware, my dear. But think of him dying alone, in that murderous radiation, of what he must have suffered! It does not bear thinking about!"

"Though it is painful," replied Sarek taking his wife's hand in his own, "we must accept his death as he accepted it. We owe this to his memory, my wife. His life was not taken from him, as it might have been hundreds of times, in accident, in battle. No... Spock deliberately chose to give it up for his shipmates, don't you see?"

"Yes... I do..." she answered thoughtfully, then giving a shuddering sigh she went on slowly, "do you know, my dear - a thought has just crossed my mind, a quotation from the Bible - 'There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.'"

"How true," Sarek said quietly, "and how right for such a man as Spock to meet such a meaningful death. What better example of devotion to duty could he give his cadets, and what better proof of his care for them?"

There was as much pride as sorrow in Sarek's voice, and the rightness of his views helped his wife, somehow, to overcome her distress. She pressed his hand and said with outward calm, "I know, my dear, you are right. But since you are going to Earth, I must go and prepare your bag. Will you take the regular flight, or commandeer a special craft?"

"I shall go by special," replied Sarek, standing up and glad to see her more composed. "I must call my department, first, to see whether any fast courier is available. It would be quicker. I must also make arrangements with T'Lar for the ceremony at Mount Seleya."

"But, Sarek, will it be possible? I mean, we don't know where Spock's katra is, do we?"

"Don't you see, my wife? Nogura told us that Jim Kirk was on board the Enterprise. He was the logical person to receive the katra of our son, since he was his friend, his t'hy'la."

"Yes, of course, I had not thought of Jim Kirk. So our son will not be lost if his spirit can be saved? Oh, Sarek, what a comforting thought in our misery!"

"It is, indeed. I must remind you, however, that the transfer of katra is a delicate operation, the more so if the keeper is a Human. It has never occurred before. But now, I must make haste." And Sarek went to his study and called the religious centre at Mount Seleya.

Amanda, in the meantime, went to their room, and packed a bag with necessities for travel, as well as some warm clothes, since Sarek, like the people of his planet, was sensitive to the cool temperature of Earth. This was a welcome task for Amanda; it occupied her thoughts for a while, but as she left the room she felt herself irresistibly drawn to the end of the gallery where Spock's quarters were located.

After a second of hesitation she walked in, and at once felt the presence of Spock in the austere room. Everything recalled his personality, and as she looked around, happy memories crowded her mind.

There was the tall bookcase where he kept his favourite volumes, most of them presents from his mother. Near the window, the desk, neat and tidy, and one of the computers which Spock had devised when studying science at the Vulcan Academy... and over there, hanging on the wall, the antique sword given by his Vulcan grandfather, which Spock used to practice sword-play.

Amanda stopped by the big wardrobe, and checked the clothes neatly folded on the shelves or hanging in precise order. Her hand lovingly touched the soft fabric of the casual suits her son used to wear when he was at home; the Vulcan tunics and the comfortable cloaks, the desert suits and boots of a tawny colour. Everything seemed to be waiting for his return. With a shudder, Amanda softly shut the door, and turned away. The same thought haunted her mind, over and over again: *Never more!*

She slowly walked to the bed, absent-mindedly smoothed out the coverlet - a Vulcan handwoven fabric - and in some strange vision, perceived on the pillow the dark head of her little boy as he eagerly waited for her to come and bid him good night... It seemed so long ago.

Sitting on the bed, she idly picked up from the bedside table a leather bound book, well worn on the edge, and probably left there by Spock during his last stay. She opened it and read on the front page: 'To my son for his tenth birthday, love from Mother'. The title read: "A Tale of Two Cities" - by one of their favourite authors, she remembered. Odd... that he had read that old book recently. Then, as she turned the page, the first phrase glared out at her:

"It was the best of times... it was the worst of times... " *Oh, my God!* she thought with a shock, *how weird to come upon this, today... The worst of times, indeed!*

An unbearable feeling of emptiness gripped her heart, and, unable to control herself any more, she gave up, and burying her head in the pillow, burst into tears.

Presently, Amanda felt the strong arms of Sarek pick her up,

and carry her away. She was so exhausted that she just let herself go when he gently put her down on her bed.

"I am sorry," she stammered. "I just broke down... I could not help it, Sarek."

"Understandable," replied her husband. "You need rest now... quiet..." He placed his hands on either side of her face, in the healing position, and by and by Amanda calmed down, her sobs subsided, and at last she drifted into a dreamless sleep.

Sarek stood a moment looking down at his wife, concern and sorrow written on his stern face; he hated to leave her alone in this situation, but an imperative duty called him away; he had to try to save what could be saved, the living spirit of Spock.

The next days went by like a dream - or, rather, like a terrible nightmare to Amanda. Sarek had gone while she was still asleep, leaving her in the care of T'Reela, but for all the discreet moral support of the Vulcan servants, she felt quite lonely.

She engaged in some activities, gardening, sorting books and papers, anything to keep her mind away from her pain, but no matter, her thoughts reverted to her son and her husband, and she wondered anxiously what the outcome of the latter's mission would be.

She dreaded the nights, the long hours of insomnia, the turmoil of unbearable thoughts haunting her mind, in spite of whatever Vulcan disciplines she could muster.

Besides the family of her husband, Amanda received few visitors. Vulcans respect people's privacy, specially when they are in mourning. The news of Spock's demise was all over ShiKahr by now - his reputation as a prominent scientist was great at the Science Academy, and his loss was deeply felt. But people remained discreet, and that was something Amanda was thankful for; she could mourn her son in peace.

From time to time she would go and spend a moment in his room, recalling past memories, but she never again lost control; *Spock*, she reflected sadly, *would not approve*. She owed it to him to behave like a true Vulcan mother.

One evening, at last came the long hoped-for call from Sarek. When her husband materialised on the screen, Amanda was shocked; his face was drawn and pale, his eyes had a tense, haunted look, so unlike his usual serene expression. He first inquired about her health, then came straight to the point. The news was incredible.

"Contrary to our expectations, my wife, Admiral Kirk is not keeping Spock's katra, and he has not brought his body back to Earth. He had him buried on the newly born world of Genesis."

At the exclamation of surprise and dismay from Amanda, Sarek briefly replied, "I cannot say more about it, for a matter of security; Starfleet has classified everything concerning Genesis. But, in spite of adverse circumstances, there is still hope, Amanda. We *have* found out that, before entering the radiation chamber, Spock entrusted his katra to Dr. McCoy. As a result, McCoy is greatly



perturbed and believed to be on the verge of insanity. I have told Kirk that the only way to save both Spock's and McCoy's spirits is to bring them to Mount Seleya, to the Hall of Ancient Thoughts. Though the planet Genesis is quarantined, Kirk has given me his word he will go there, and will bring the body of our son back to Vulcan." After a pause, Sarek resumed. "I trust that Kirk will do his utmost for the sake of his friends. I shall return home in three day's time, and then we shall wait for the Admiral. I know this unexpected contretemps causes you great distress, my wife, but you must be confident that everything possible - even impossible - will be done. Take care of yourself."

The screen went blank, and Amanda remained sitting motionless, stunned by the news. Another blow had come down upon them. Would there be no end to their misery? Would they ever succeed in saving the essence of her son, and have it joined to the Eternal Wisdom of the Vulcans? Once again, Amanda's mind became the prey of contradictory emotions, of hope and despair, revolt and acceptance... and some more days went by.

Finally, one afternoon, Sarek called his wife from the intergalactic space-port. He was very brief. He would be home in an hour, and was bringing a guest with him. He could say no more, he had to make haste. The connection was cut off before she could say anything.

Amanda was both anxious about the outcome of Sarek's mission, and somewhat irritated at having a visitor in the house when she was in mourning for her son. She was surprised at Sarek's invitation; this was certainly not the moment to entertain guests. But upon reflection she realised that her husband had probably his reasons; Vulcans had usually good reasons for their actions.

So when the front door opened and steps were heard in the hallway, Amanda went to the door of the sitting room to greet the travellers, and she stopped short at the sight of a woman in the familiar red and black uniform of Starfleet. She stared, amazed, at the pretty face which looked familiar, and as the visitor came to her with a tremulous smile, Amanda started and exclaimed "Uhura! Lt. Uhura!" The two women hugged each other, overcome by emotion. Presently Amanda collected herself and, leading the way to the sitting room, she made Uhura sit by her, and pressed her hands.

"I never imagined, when Sarek announced a visitor, that it was you, my dear. How is it that you are not on the Enterprise? What happened?"

"It is a long story, I am afraid," began the Bantu woman, but she was interrupted by T'Reela who glided in carrying a tray. The Vulcan girl served cold drinks, then withdrew as quietly as she had come.

Uhura sipped her fruit juice gratefully; she was hot and tired, and was not accustomed yet to the heavy gravity and oppressive heat of Vulcan.

"Commander Uhura," Sarek said after a seemly pause, "has come with me to wait here for Admiral Kirk, because she has no place to go. Actually, she would probably be under arrest if she had stayed on Earth. I offered her the protection and hospitality of our people."

"Of course, my dear, you are welcome to stay with us - but I don't understand. Let me know what happened!" and Amanda looked from Sarek to Uhura, wanting to know.

So, speaking in turn, they informed Amanda of the latest developments; Jim Kirk, after Sarek's visit, had requested permission to return to the planet Genesis to search for Spock's coffin, but with Genesis being off limits, this request was denied by Admiral Morrow, Starfleet Commander, who gave definite orders to keep away from the planet. Thereupon Kirk had decided to ignore the orders and, with his faithful team, proceeded to break enough regulations and commit enough offences to compromise his career for the rest of his life.

They had freed McCoy from jail, stolen the Enterprise from a restricted area, sabotaged the U.S.S. Excelsior, and escaped from spacedock in the nick of time, with the assistance of Uhura who had stayed behind to work the transporter and jam the communications net. That was why she had been in danger of arrest by the Starfleet Police, and had found refuge at the Vulcan Embassy from where Sarek had brought her safely to Vulcan.

Appalled by this recital, and by the implications of Kirk's daring actions, Amanda turned pale and exclaimed,

"Uhura, my dear! What have you done? You all have endangered your careers, you even run the risk of court-martial, don't you? And all this for the sake of Spock?"

"True, Amanda," Uhura quietly replied, "but Spock gave his life to save all of us."

This proof of the deep regard the Enterprise officers felt for her son moved Amanda to tears, and she was unable to utter a word.

"May I point out," Sarek put in, "that Admiral Kirk acted also for the sake of Dr. McCoy. The Doctor was not prepared to receive Spock's katra, and this might affect his sanity. Therefore, Kirk and his friends have made this daring move to save him from a living death in an asylum, as well as to save the spirit of our son. I must add that, before leaving Earth, I was informed by Sonorak of some reports from the science ship Grissom, at the moment in orbit around Genesis. They have detected on the surface the photon tube in which Spock was buried. So we may logically expect Kirk to recover the body of our son, then to bring it immediately to Vulcan."

"Let us hope so," breathed his wife. "This uncertainty, this waiting is really more than we can bear... "

Moved by her distress, Uhura laid a hand on Amanda's arm and said softly, "It should not be long, now. We'll have news any time for sure."

"Thank you, my dear," Amanda replied with a pitiful smile, then, getting to her feet, she chided herself "but forgive me, what a poor host I am! You had a long voyage, and I am sure you will be glad to refresh yourself and have some rest. Come - let me show you to your room."

Uhura's room, located in the long wing reserved for guests,

overlooked the garden. It was simply furnished, cool and comfortable.

The young woman was standing at the window, admiring the view, when Amanda came in followed by a maid carrying towels, bathrobe and some colourful Vulcan robes.

"I thought that you might like some fresh clothes for a change. This uniform must be terribly warm; you will be more comfortable in these robes. I hope you will find one your size."

"Why! They are lovely!" Uhura exclaimed, delighted. "This is just what I like to wear when I'm off duty."

"Is it? I am so glad. I shall leave you, now - make yourself comfortable. You will find the bathroom next door. You might like to take a nap afterwards? You have time before dinner."

"Thank you for everything, Amanda, but, if I may... " Uhura wavered.

"Yes, my dear?"

"I hope you won't mind, but I would like to ask a personal question. Why is it so imperative to bring Dr. McCoy and Spock to Mount Seleya? We have been told that McCoy is carrying the spirit of Spock in his mind, but how is it possible? And what is going to take place on Mount Seleya?"

Amanda shook her head. "Sarek," she said, "could explain better than I the religious rituals of the Vulcans - but in a few words... You are aware of the Vulcan mind meld, I presume?"

"Yes, of course, Mr. Spock has performed it occasionally."

"Well, when a Vulcan is going to die, through the mind meld he is able to entrust his essence to a relative or a friend. Although he is medically dead, his spirit is still alive. Then the person carrying the katra goes, with the family, to the religious centre of Mount Seleya, and, in the course of a simple but impressive ceremony, the spirit of the dead is removed from the mind of the living, and placed in the Hall of Ancient Thought, to survive there eternally.

"Thus his wisdom, his knowledge, are preserved, for the betterment of all Vulcans, for I understand that the Initiates can communicate with these kattras. So this is what my husband means to do in order to save the spirit of Spock, and this is why it is so important to have both Dr. McCoy and Spock's remains taken to Vulcan."

"This is truly fantastic!" Uhura exclaimed. "I had heard that the people here can achieve incredible feats, and I have witnessed some amazing actions by Spock, but this is beyond anything conceivable."

"Yes, so it seems to Humans who consider the Vulcans as cold, logical, emotionless beings. But you have to know that Vulcans are a mystic people. Meditation, asceticism and other mental practices bring them in close communion with the One, the Supreme Wisdom. It is quite natural to them, for, besides being endowed with many powers, they possess a mysterious seventh sense which enables them to be one with their Creator, and with the Universe."

"I understand." Uhura nodded, very impressed by these revelations from Amanda. "This must explain, then, the charisma, the aura of serenity they have about them."

"Indeed," Amanda replied thoughtfully. "Even Spock, though he was not a pure Vulcan, carried that aura." Then, heaving a deep sigh, she turned away, saying, "But I must leave you now, you need some rest. I shall see you later, at dinner time."

Commander Uhura was to remember that evening in Sarek's home as a memorable event. In the late afternoon she had joined her hosts in the garden where they liked to take a walk at this time of day, to enjoy the cool breeze from the distant mountains.

Uhura was quite elegant in her Vulcan gown and sandals, and strolling along with Amanda she duly appreciated the beauty of the scenery, glorified by the gorgeous colours of sunset.

Later they sat down to dinner, and Uhura thoroughly enjoyed the simple but delicious vegetarian food, and the quiet conversation led by Sarek with his customary tranquil dignity. The meal was being served by a young couple, under the watchful eye of T'Reela, and Uhura did not miss the glances of curiosity on the part of the Vulcans.

I'll bet they've never seen anybody like me, she thought, amused. *Besides Dr. M'Benga, I don't think many of my kind have ever come to this world.*

Uhura noticed that her hosts were talking of innocuous topics when the servants were around, and she gladly recalled with them their journey to Babel, on board the Enterprise. It seemed so long ago! But as she watched them both she thought that they had not changed much. Sarek, as a Vulcan, did not seem to have aged, except for the silver streaks in his dark hair, and he still carried himself with the haughty poise of the plenipotentiary ambassador.

Amanda, naturally, looked more her age, but she was still the graceful lady who had won all the hearts on the Enterprise. However, her blue eyes, sad and tired, revealed all the distress of a mother.

When the meal was over Amanda proposed to have coffee, or Vulcan tea, in the sitting room, and she led the way. She sat down on the large settee, imported from Earth, and beckoned her guest to join her. But Uhura stopped, fascinated, by a full-sized portrait of a pretty young woman holding a solemn-looking little boy close to her.

"Ah, you are looking at the portrait of my wife and son," Sarek said behind her. "It is very much like them, many years ago."

"I am afraid the painter has flattered me," Amanda smiled, "but it is a very good portrait of Spock. He was seven at the time."

"Indeed," Sarek added with a touch of pride. "Spock had just passed the Kas-Wan with success. We thought that a portrait was called for to celebrate the occasion."

"It is such a beautiful picture," Uhura commented quietly, then sitting down by Amanda she went on. "I heard about this test, this

maturity trial for Vulcan boys. It is quite exacting, I was told."

"It is shocking and revolting!" Amanda broke in hotly. "I always wondered how logical Vulcans can send their sons out in the wilderness for days, and let them face dangerous elements and wild beasts, just to test their character."

This emotional outburst brought a typical Vulcan expression on the impassive face of Sarek; the way he raised a haughty eyebrow, so much like his son, triggered a flow of memories in Uhura's mind. She also felt that this was a subject on which the couple still differed in opinion, and she realized how difficult it must have been for Amanda to accept some of the more alien customs of her adopted country, even more difficult when her son was concerned.

This slight disagreement was interrupted by the Vulcan housekeeper bringing in the coffee tray. Sarek sat down in the armchair by the settee, and his wife started pouring the fragrant beverage. As Uhura sipped her coffee with relish, she was most pleasantly surprised by the flavour, so much tastier than the hot drink served under the name of coffee in the Fleet. To her, it tasted just like home. As she looked around her she had the strange impression of being at once in very familiar, and very alien surroundings. The decoration of the room, some of the furniture, indicated the Human touch of Amanda, but, as it were, inlaid in a Vulcan setting. The blending of these two cultures resulted in something unique and precious, and that was just what Spock had been - Spock, the only child of a Vulcan and a Human.

Uhura's attention was attracted by something very Vulcan indeed hanging on the wall, above the piano - a lyre, a Vulcan harp of great size, beautifully carved. Sarek, catching her admiring glance, explained,

"This is the harp of my father, who was renowned as a musician. It is an heirloom, much prized in our family, and is more than two hundred years old." Sarek paused briefly then said quietly, "Spock used to play when he was at home, and he was quite gifted."

"I know," Uhura replied with a smile. "I remember he used to accompany my songs when we had music in the Rec room."

"And," put in Amanda, "I recall the concert you both gave the Delegates, on the Enterprise. You remember, Sarek, when we were going to the Conference at Babel?"

"Indeed, it was a memorable evening," her husband replied thoughtfully. Then, setting his cup down, he turned to his guest, looking gravely at her lovely face. "Miss Uhura," he said. "I take it you were on board the Enterprise during the action in the Mutara Nebula?"

"Yes, I was."

"Would you mind telling us what you saw - or heard - of the last moments of Spock? We would be grateful to have the direct evidence of an eye witness, unless you would rather not recall those events."

"Oh, no, Ambassador, I... I don't mind, but as I was constantly on the Bridge, at my station, I was not actually present when Spock..." Uhura, moved by the turn of the conversation, felt

unable to say more.

"I understand," Sarek replied quietly, "but could you tell us about your experience of the situation at that moment?"

"Certainly, but... I am afraid it will be painful for you, Amanda."

"It will," Amanda nodded, "but, in a way, I feel that I have to know."

For a moment, Uhura closed her eyes, marshalling her thoughts and bringing back to mind the dramatic events of Mutara, then, in a low voice, she began her tale.

She briefly mentioned the chase and the battle between the Enterprise and the Reliant, manned by Khan and his gang, concluding in the deadly engagement in the Nebula. There Kirk, outsmarting his enemy, had blasted his ship and killed his crew.

But the situation was critical on the Enterprise; shields non-existent, power reduced to impulse drive, and to make it worse, a dangerous radioactive leak prevented the engineers from repairing the warp engines immediately. That was the moment Khan chose for his last revenge; before dying he had the time to trigger the Genesis Device which, to create life, first annihilated all life already existing. And the Enterprise was unable to escape from the lethal Genesis wave.

"I shall remember all my life," Uhura said with a shudder, "the awful feeling of helplessness, even resignation, prevailing on the Bridge. Genesis was going to explode, the minutes went by, and there was nothing Admiral Kirk or Mr. Scott could do. We were in a daze, watching the screen with fascination, waiting for doomsday... and I hardly noticed Mr. Spock as he walked past me to the turbolift.

"Then, all of a sudden, Chekov called out that the warp engines were back on line. Admiral Kirk ordered full speed, and we flashed away, just in time, from the Genesis wave. We were saved - it was a wonderful feeling. We all cheered, and watched on screen the birth of a new world from the Nebula Mutara.

"That was when Dr. McCoy called the Admiral on the intercom, telling him to come down immediately to Engineering. The tone of his voice made us realize that something was wrong - and then we saw that Spock was gone. Admiral Kirk turned livid and rushed away, and we were left staring at one another, wondering... fearing the worst.

"Chekov, I recall, burst out, 'It's Captain Spock, something happened to Captain Spock, I tell you!' Chekov always felt a great admiration for Spock, since he had arrived on the Enterprise as a young ensign, and Spock had tutored him, and helped him along. Well, after a moment which seemed ages to all of us, as we were waiting for news, Admiral Kirk came back, and the expression on his face told us more clearly than words that it was all over. However, he briefly explained how Spock had saved the ship, saved all of us; he said that if we were still alive, we owed it to Spock. The whole bridge was shocked, some of the cadets, Spock's pupils, were in tears... and so was I... Excuse me, I cannot..." and Uhura had to stop, overcome by emotion.

A moment later, when she seemed more composed, Sarek said

diffidently: "May I ask if you saw him afterwards? Was he burned, disfigured by the radiation?"

"Yes... I saw him. He was lying in the stasis room, with the crew members who had been killed during the action. Kirk had him buried in a torpedo tube, wrapped up in a long black robe. We went there to see him before his coffin was sealed. And yes, his face was rather burnt, but not as disfigured as we had expected. And what impressed us most was the expression of peace and serenity he had achieved, even in death. It seemed to us that Spock had overcome all pain and suffering, and reached a state beyond care."

"Indeed he had, Miss Uhura," Sarek said quietly, a strange, remote expression in his eyes.

"Then, the following morning," Uhura resumed after a short pause, "we assembled for the funeral in the missile chamber. Admiral Kirk delivered a short eulogy. He was as moved as we were... After the salute the torpedo was prepared for launching, and Mr. Scott played 'Amazing Grace' on his bagpipes; it was so beautiful, so eerie in that resounding hall, that it took my breath away... Finally, the missile was fired, and we stood there, silent, watching the torpedo with Spock in it streak away and disappear on the new world Genesis."

The tense silence which followed was broken by Amanda who raised her stricken face and said softly, "That was a wonderful idea of Mr. Scott to play 'Amazing Grace'. I always liked the melody, but I never thought that it would be used at my son's funeral, out in space."

"May I ask what it is?" Sarek inquired. "I have never heard of it."

"It is a traditional hymn often played at the request of people on Earth for the funeral of a relation, or friend."

"Ah - then it was proper and kind of Mr. Scott to do that for our son."

"It was, indeed," Amanda agreed. "Because, my dear, I do think it is the way Spock led his life - with amazing grace."

Next morning, Amanda stayed in while her husband and Uhura went to the major Communication Centre at ShiKahr, where a direct message from Kirk was expected. Left by herself, and a prey to contradictory emotions, from hope to despondency, Amanda began preparing the vestments she and Sarek were going to wear for the ceremony at the temple.

The funeral services were performed in private; only family and close friends attended. However, Amanda imagined that the command team of the Enterprise would wish to be present, and it would be right and proper, considering the devotion they had shown for McCoy and Spock.

By midday, Amanda was waiting in the gallery when she at last heard Sarek and their guest walk into the hall. They called out to her, and there was such a note of urgency in their voices that she went cold with foreboding. She got to her feet, but could not move, and she just stood, all of a tremble, and fearing the worst.

When Uhura came and took her hands in hers, crying and smiling at the same time, Amanda could but stammer, "Uhura! Did... did they find him on Genesis?"

"They did, my dear, they found him, and they are on their way here!"

"Thank God," whispered Spock's mother. "I thought for a dreadful moment that all was lost."

"No, my wife." Sarek looked quite moved. "We received a message from Kirk. They will reach Vulcan by the end of the day. But come and sit down, there is more to tell you."

They made her sit between the two of them, then Uhura, with her lovely smile, declared, "Amanda, you have to prepare yourself for a shock, for something unbelievable, inconceivable...!"

"A shock? I believe I had more shocks these last few days than for the rest of my life. I think that now I can stand anything."

Sarek and his guest exchanged a glance, and, on Sarek's sign, Uhura took a deep breath, and continued, "Amanda, listen. They have indeed found Spock on the planet Genesis - but... they found him alive!"

Dumbfounded, Amanda stared from one to the other, then, seeing their expression, she finally caught the meaning of the word, and stammered,

"Alive! Spock alive? But... you must be out of your mind! He is dead, you told us how you saw him dead in his coffin, didn't you?"

"I did. But the fact remains that they found Spock alive on Genesis. It is a miracle, Amanda, a miracle!" and Uhura, crying and laughing, laid her arm on her shoulders.

Wisely, Sarek allowed the two Human women time to calm down. Since he had married Amanda, he had come to accept, but not quite understand, these occasional emotional outbursts, although he had to credit his wife with exceptional self-control - for a Human.

At last Amanda, wiping away her tears, faltered, "Pray forgive us, Sarek, for having yielded to our emotions... but is it possible? Can it be true? Have you any explanation?"

"It is indeed an extraordinary occurrence, probably due to the Genesis effect. So far as I know, it appears that the cells of our son have been regenerated by this amazing energy - in other words, Spock is reborn. We shall know more about it when Admiral Kirk arrives, of course. But if that new world has given Spock a new life, his mind is still a blank, since his essence is in Dr. McCoy's keeping."

"But tell me, sir," Uhura inquired, "the katra ritual makes it possible to return his spirit to his body, doesn't it?"

"No, Commander. Through the katra ceremony the spirit of the dead is placed in the Hall of Ancient Thought, not into a living being."

"There is nothing we can do, then?" Amanda asked helplessly.

"Yes, there is another possibility - an ancient ritual that I have in mind," Sarek replied thoughtfully. "It has not been performed for thousands of years. Actually, it is more legend than fact. But it would be the only possible way to save Spock."

"And what is it? Do tell us, Sarek?"

"It is the Fal-Tor-Pan, or Refusion. It would be the only procedure to return Spock's consciousness where it belongs. But the point is - can it be done? I expect the Elders still know the rituals, but will they agree to perform this long-disused ceremony? That is what I must find out, and we must go to Mount Seleya immediately. I shall make a formal request to T'Lar for the Refusion." Sarek stood up and continued, "Will you kindly prepare yourselves, ladies - we shall leave promptly. I have first to call the Communication Centre and request all incoming messages to be transferred to Mount Seleya, and I must ask T'Lar for the favour of an audience."

Fifteen minutes later, the three of them were on their way in Sarek's fast air-car, bound for the monastery where the fate of Spock and McCoy would be settled.

Mount Seleya rose, stark and impressive, at the confines of a wide deserted plain. Its brown red peaks and cliffs stood like a forbidding barrier against the red orange sky. When Sarek stopped his aircar at the foot of a long winding ramp, Uhura looked up with misgivings at the massive walls of the Retreat perched on the top of the cliff. She was uncomfortable in the sizzling heat of the late afternoon; the thin air made her breathless, and she was sure she would never make it up there.

Fortunately, Sarek led them to a side portal hewed in the rock, and after following a dimly lit passageway they reached a vaulted hall where an adept was waiting for them. The Vulcan silently opened a door onto a lift, and they were rapidly taken up into the heart of the Retreat.

There, Amanda and Uhura were invited to wait while another adept, clad in a dark hooded robe, led Sarek away to the council of the Elders.

The latter were obviously aware of the extraordinary request Spock's father was about to make, and the whole community was astir at this unprecedented event.

With anxious eyes Amanda watched her husband withdraw, then turned to her companion. "Since we have to wait, now," she said, "would you like to look round the place? Non-adepts are admitted in certain parts of the building, and there are also visitors' rooms."

The retreat of Mount Seleya had been built and hewed in the mountain by generations of Vulcans, and had grown into an intricate maze of galleries, halls and stairways. Uhura was impressed by the austere surroundings, and by the silence which prevailed, but when Amanda led her through the visitors' lounge onto a balcony, a cry of surprise escaped her lips.

The view was breathtaking. The ridge they stood on plunged in

a sheer drop down to the desert, and all around volcanic crags and peaks rose in fantastic shapes, outlined by the fierce glare of Eridani. Across a deep canyon, on the side of another cliff, stood a huge red rock building; a causeway wound up to its pillared gate.

Amanda pointed out, "There is the Sanctuary, the Hall of Ancient Thought. This is where the Fal-Tor-Pan will be held, providing that T'Lar and the Elders agree to try it. And if they do not... what will become of the spirit of my son, of poor Dr. McCoy? Should all your daring efforts be wasted?"

"Amanda, I am sure they will find a way - take heart, my dear," said Uhura, inwardly wishing she could be sure it were true.

Soft footsteps sounded on the flagstones behind them, and Sarek appeared, followed by two good-looking girls clad in white and blue robes. They were carrying bowls and dishes which they set down on a low table, and silently left.

Sarek, sitting down, invited Uhura and his wife to join him, saying, "Since we have the opportunity, it is advisable to take some food, as waiting will be long and we shall need all our strength and patience."

"Sarek, please tell us what happened... Do they accept the Fal-Tor-Pan?" Amanda wanted to know.

"They do. After long debate and consideration, the Council of the Elders has decided to attempt the ritual of Refusion. The danger is as great for McCoy as for Spock, however. The Refusion has never been done with a Human; they do not know what the outcome will be. Nevertheless, they take up the challenge for the sake of our family, for the sake of Spock. T'Lar is well aware of the risk, but she is willing to conduct the rituals. Now everything is being prepared for the ceremony, and presently T'Lar and the priests will go up to the Temple and retire for meditation. So you can set your mind at rest, Amanda; all that can be done will be done."

"I am so relieved, so thankful, my husband. When do we go to the Hall?"

"I regret to say, my wife, that I alone will attend the Refusion. It is not a traditional katra ritual, you understand. Because of these exceptional circumstances, the Elders do not admit non-initiated or non-Vulcans."

"But," Amanda cried, "I am his mother! I have the right to be present with you when Spock's life is at stake!"

"Yes, you are his mother, but you are Human, Amanda, and the Refusion the Master is going to undertake is so critical that the least interference, particularly any emotional surge, may compromise the chance of success. T'Lar is adamant about it. We have to accept her decision, for the sake of our son."

Silently, Amanda fought for control. She was revolted; she wished to protest but upon reflection she had to admit that her love for her son might indeed interfere with the mental powers of the community.

Uhura, watching her, was all admiration for her apparent self-restraint. *Good Lord!* she thought, *I would be screaming with rage and frustration were I in her place!*

Presently Amanda, taking a deep breath, said in a tight voice, "I am sorry, Sarek, you are right. I should not let my motherly emotions get the better of me. I shall wait here, but I hope they will let me see him afterwards."

"Of course," her husband replied. "You will meet him, but I must warn you that, should the Refusion be effective, he will probably have to stay here for a thorough mental re-education. This has been discussed at the meeting of the Elders. They think that even though his spirit be totally returned, Spock may not retain all his faculties and mental powers. Due to the long separation of mind and body, it may take him some time to fully recover his memories, his knowledge."

"Indeed," Uhura agreed. "It takes time but I know it can be done. Many years ago, on one of our missions, a space probe attacked some crew members, and wiped my mind clean. My memory was entirely gone. But after a few weeks of training and re-education, I was completely restored."

"Then, in this case," Amanda put in, "I have to stay here with Spock. He needs to recover his real self, and his past memories, what he learned as a child, and who but his mother can help him in this matter?"

"Who indeed?" Sarek nodded. "Be comforted, my wife; I have already obtained permission for you to assist in his re-education. For all the computing equipment available here, all the data stored in the Library banks, your presence will be invaluable. But you will need much patience, my wife."

"I shall have all the patience in the world where my son is concerned. Do not forget, my dear, that I was a teacher."

"I remember," Sarek acknowledged, then getting to his feet he added, "I must leave now. I have to see whether any news of Kirk has come through!"

"May I come with you to the Com Centre, Ambassador?" Uhura asked. "I would like to contact my shipmates, as they do not know that I am here, and I shall join them when they arrive."

"Certainly, Commander, I shall take you to the station. Incidentally, we have obtained from Security and the Spaceport authorities a special warrant to land here, at the foot of Mount Seleya. Time is of the essence in this matter - there should not be a moment lost in bringing Spock up to the Hall where all concerned will be waiting. We must leave you now, my wife. I must go and wait for Admiral Kirk at the sanctuary. When I shall return, I shall bring, I hope, our son along with me."

"God willing," whispered Amanda, overcome by emotion. She and Sarek touched hands in the Vulcan way, then she and Uhura hugged and kissed each other, eyes brimming with tears, and once again she was left alone with her distress and her hopes.

By sunset Amanda was standing on one of the balconies looking down at the desert sands, turned crimson with the glow of Eridani.

Some of the adepts had joined her, and they watched people gathering at the foot of the cliffs. More and more were arriving,

and now quite a multitude was assembling down there and waiting silently.

Amanda had been surprised and deeply moved to hear that all Shikahr was aware of the extraordinary event about to take place at Mount Seleya. The social rank of Sarek's clan, the reputation of Spock (a legend in itself) and lastly the Fal-Tor-Pan, never attempted, never achieved since pre-Reform times, all these circumstances explained the fact that the Vulcans appeared to have shed their usual indifference and become the prey of burning curiosity, even of a certain, though well controlled, excitement. That was the reason for their presence at the sanctuary.

Half an hour previously Amanda had received a last message from Sarek, saying that Kirk and his crew were on the approach to Vulcan. Uhura had been able to communicate with them, and learned that the Enterprise had been destroyed, and that they were flying a Klingon fighter-craft, a Bird of Prey. Also that Spock was with them, alive but unconscious and declining rapidly.

The news had naturally increased Amanda's anxiety, and there she was, on top of the cliff, waiting desperately for that Klingon ship which was to bring her son.

Eridani was slowly sinking behind the skyline, a crimson dusk was settling down, and some torches were already flickering here and there in the gloom down below when a distant rumble resounded over the mountains, growing louder every second. Amanda's heart thumped painfully, and she clutched the bannister for support.

A murmur arose from the darkening vale, all the faces turned to the direction of the rolling sound. And suddenly, with an ear-splitting roar which echoed along the cliffs, a huge black form, wings spread out like a gigantic vulture, appeared from behind a peak, and slowly came down, silhouetted against the red glow of the setting sun.

Amanda felt that her companions were as startled as herself. They probably had never seen a Klingon fighter, and the appearance of that monster, hovering menacingly over their heads, was enough to impress the most stolid of them.

Carefully, cleverly, in a maelstrom of noise and red sand, the craft descended and finally touched ground. Almost immediately a hatch was opened, sending a stream of light into the gathering dusk. A ramp was lowered, and Amanda - everyone - watched breathlessly.

And there at last appeared the figures of the daring travellers from Genesis. In the last glimmer of the sunset Amanda could just make out the party of officers carrying a stretcher, and carefully walking down the ramp. There they stopped, were joined by another figure in uniform, walking fast - Commander Uhura no doubt - and then together they started up the causeway leading to the Temple.

Amanda could barely see their small group in the flare of the torches lining their way. From her place she perceived the distant sound of flute and drums, and then the group disappeared from view, round a bend near the Temple.

Then the music came to an end, and an eerie cloak of silence settled on Mount Seleya. The Fal-Tor-Pan was about to begin.



Nicole Coulet

When Amanda later recalled that memorable night, she could not tell whether she was awake or dreaming. She only remembered having shared an extraordinary experience.

She did not dare think of Spock, afraid that her thoughts might endanger the restoration of his mind. But she reached out to her husband who, she was sure, would be standing in the Hall by their son, and she sent him her affection and support by means of their mindlink.

All at once she felt her mind surrounded, supported by myriads of other minds; it was almost frightening to sense the force of the Vulcan spirits, bound together towards a single aim, but Amanda was conversant with Vulcan disciplines; she somehow overcame her fear and felt herself swept up in an incredible impulse to the Hall of Ancient Thought. The bond which linked her to her husband enabled her, Human though she was, to share the consciousness of all these Vulcans intent on one purpose: the Fal-Tor-Pan.

During that night Amanda lost all sense of space and time. She only knew that she was a small fraction of a chain of thoughts supporting T'Lar, Spock and McCoy with their care and mental powers. The priests, the adepts, Sarek and all the people outside, around the Hall, were mindlinked to assist the officiant of the Refusion.

Amanda knew that she could only be a distant witness of this amazing ritual, but even so she sensed such wisdom, such serenity in these Vulcans that in her heart she had the conviction that all would be well.

Then came the dawn, heralded by the cold wind from the mountains; the moonless night of Vulcan gave way to the purple light of early morning, and Amanda, cold and tired, found herself sitting on a couch in the visitors' lounge, recovering from her trance.

Two girls were standing by, quietly watching her. The memory of the night came back to her, as well as the strange impression that she had been at once in two different places.

She stood up and asked the girls: "Has the Fal-Tor-Pan been achieved? Do you know anything?"

"Yes, the ceremony is over," one of the adepts replied. "The procession is coming back from the Hall. Do you wish to go downstairs?"

"Of course. Do you know where Sarek is?"

"He is with the priests. Please, come."

They led the way down the stone stairways to the entrance hall of the Retreat. They had just reached the dark hall when the huge doors were pushed open, and the cortege of monks and adepts came in, in a glory of radiant light. Amanda watched breathlessly as they glided by; then came the sturdy bearers carrying on their shoulders T'Lar reclining in a sedan chair. The old lady looked exhausted, with drawn face and half-closed eyes, but when they brought her level with Spock's mother, she raised her head, and the two women exchanged a long, tense glance which spoke volumes. Then the dignitaries marched on impassively across the vaulted room and

through the gateway leading to the private section of the monastery.

Amanda heaved a long sigh, and looked again to the door where appeared the graceful bevy of white-robed girls who, in spite of their long vigil through the night, looked cool and unconcerned. But Amanda was looking beyond them, scanning the group of the priests in their hooded white cloaks, and she sighed with relief at the sight of Sarek, a dark figure in his ceremonial robes, standing in the doorway.

She went to her husband, trembling with cold and emotion, and gazed at his face searchingly. He took her hand, gave her one of his rare and precious smiles, and led her out to the head of the causeway, washed in the scarlet light of the sunrise.

"Be comforted, my wife. All is well, our son is alive and in good health."

"Thank God, Sarek! Our hopes have been fulfilled, our prayers have been answered at last. But where is he? May I see him now?"

Sarek turned around, looked at the last group of the procession coming up the path, and replied in a light tone,

"Spock has been renewing acquaintance with his friends. He has recognized Admiral Kirk and his shipmates." Then, as the hooded priests arrived at the gate, Sarek called quietly, "Spock!" and Amanda, her heart beating painfully, saw a tall and familiar figure, clad in an immaculate robe, stop... and slowly turn towards them.

A tense moment of silence followed, when she felt the reassuring hand of her husband grip her shoulder. Spock was standing still as a statue, staring intently at his mother's face, obviously searching in his mind.

To her surprise and great relief there was no trace of a burn on his pale face - he looked just the same, as though the Mutara Nebula tragedy had never occurred. But in his dark eyes she recognized the puzzled, even impatient, expression he had had as a boy when he could not obtain quick answers to his questions.

At last the statue came to life, and Spock walked up to his parents, then stopped and said in a questioning voice, "Mother?"

Not trusting her own voice, Amanda could only nod and smile, and hold out her hand for the ritual salute. Spock hesitated, then touched her hand and, in the voice of a child still unsure and asking for corroboration, he said, "You are Mother... You are Amanda... aren't you?"

Her eyes brimming with tears of joy, Amanda replied, "Yes, my dear, I am your mother, and you are my son, reborn to life!"

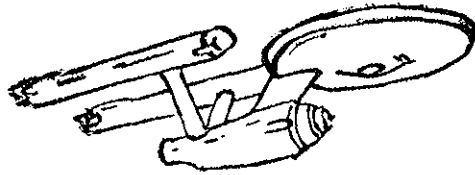
Gently, Spock put out his hand and touched his mother's face, then he said in a puzzled voice, "Your cheek is wet, Mother, why is that?"

"Because I am crying, Spock, crying for joy and thankfulness."

He looked at Sarek inquiringly, and his father, nodding wisely, replied, with a smile in his eyes, "Your mother is Human, Spock, that is why."



And for the two Vulcans and their Human lady, this was at last the best of times.



THE UNSUNG HEROES

When Star Trek is mentioned,
Who do we all think of?
Most of us think of the actors and actresses,
Who brought the characters to life,
And of its creator, Gene Roddenberry.

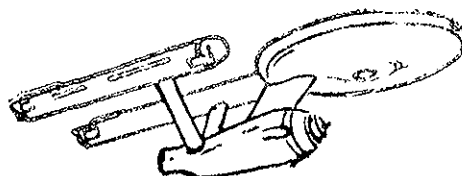
Now, though, I think the time has come,
To give our thanks to those people,
Without whose talent Star Trek might never have been made,
And yet who are hardly ever mentioned.
I refer, of course, to the many off-screen people,
Who help to make a show.
The Unsung Heroes of film and television.

They are the directors and producers,
Writers, assistants and lighting technicians,
Sound technicians and the special effects people.
The stuntmen and women.
All the craftsmen involved in creating the sets,
And the props, wardrobe and make-up people.

These and many other gifted and talented people
Helped to make Star Trek the success it is,
And I, for one, would like to take this opportunity,
To thank them for what they did.
For, without realising it at the time,
They have helped to create a legend.

May that legend continue for all time,
As a tribute to their talent.

Christine J Jones



A CONVERSATION

"You're a logical man," said the Doctor,
"You keep your emotions at bay -
And yet you risked all for the life of a friend,
Is there more to this tale than you say?"
"I've a logical answer," the Vulcan replied.
"My reasons are perfectly clear;
It cost time and money to train Captain Kirk,
So I took the force of that spear."

"You're a logical man," said the Doctor,
"And don't need good friends to survive.
So kindly explain the delight on your face
When you saw James T. Kirk was alive."
"I've a logical answer," the Vulcan replied.
"Replacements aren't easy to find.
The loss of a Captain's a loss to the Fleet -
I'd no other thoughts on my mind."

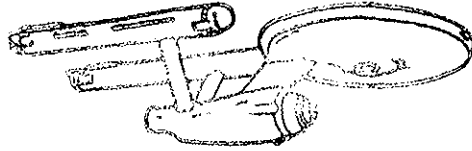
"You're a logical man," said the Doctor,
"Your mind is important to you.
So why do you risk it again and again
To safeguard this ship and her crew?"
"I've a logical answer," the Vulcan replied.
"I know what a starship would cost;
My mind is a tool, it was logically used
To ensure Starfleet assets weren't lost."

"You're a logical man," said the Doctor,
"You follow your head, not your heart.
So why did you send an impossible flare
When you knew we were doomed from the start?"
"I've a logical answer," the Vulcan replied.
"I had a decision to make.
Igniting the shuttlecraft fuel seemed to be
The logical action to take."

"You're a logical man," said the Doctor,
"And love is a useless emotion.
So why, when you melded to keep us from harm
Could we sense your unyielding devotion?"
"I've a logical answer," the Vulcan replied.
"You had to be quickly prepared.
I could only succeed in defeating your fears
If I gave the illusion I cared."

"You're a logical man," said the Doctor,
"And Vulcan reserve is your goal.
So why are you working with beings like us
Who try to break down your control?"
"I've a logical answer," the Vulcan replied.
"I'm making my own observations.
You are useful examples of simple life forms
In all their diverse combinations."

"I'm not fooled at all!" cried the Doctor,
 "You're only deceiving yourself.
 Your actions were logical? In a pig's eye!
 You stubborn, green pointy-eared elf!"
 "That's illogical, Doctor," the Vulcan replied,
 And watched as he stormed out of sight.
 (For logic dictated he'd never admit
 The odds that the Doctor was right.)
 Mrs. Pippin



KEEPERS OF THE DREAM

(Inspired by: To Hold a Dream by Patricia de Voss)

We are the holders
 The keepers and the caretakers
 Of an all-important dream.
 A dream and a hope that mankind
 Will one day stand side by side in peace,
 Not only with each other,
 But with aliens as well.
 And it is our privilege to hold
 This special dream for future generations.
 And we must keep this dream alive
 Until the time is right
 For us to turn that dream
 Into a reality.

We must do our best
 To pass on our dream
 From generation to generation,
 And ensure that the dream is kept alive.
 This dream was a gift to us
 From the man who created it -
 A man who had a vision,
 A vision of how he hoped mankind would progress.
 And the actors who brought his dream to life -
 Even though, at present, it is only a television show -
 Allowed us to share that dream.
 That dream is now in our care,
 And we must ensure that it is kept alive
 Until the time is right for the formation
 Of a United Federation of Planets.

Christine J Jones

WHAT AM I?

by

Maggy Edwards

CHAPTER ONE

The heat of the Vulcan day was rapidly fading. Shadows crept across the small well-kept garden until they reached the feet of the motionless figure sitting quietly, deep in thought.

A voice disturbed the silent reverie.

"Spock, are you there?"

The speaker emerged from the house, a tall woman with a gentle face and blue eyes that squinted against the low rays of remaining sunlight.

He rose slowly and turned to face her. "Here, Mother."

"Spock, your father will be home soon. Please prepare for his arrival and try not to upset him tonight."

Amanda saw the tensing of Spock's jaw, and she knew trouble lay ahead. Since her son had returned from a visit to her mother on Earth there had been a restlessness about him, and the disagreements between Spock and his father Sarek had been bitter and frequent. They never raised their voices - it was almost a battle of minds. Spock was always the one to concede and go to his room, leaving Sarek the victor. But Amanda was not at all certain it was because he was right but because Spock did not feel ready to resist the Vulcan belief that the head of the family was to be respected and obeyed in all things.

Spock didn't answer her, but she saw his face freeze into the mask he wore when he was in situations that threatened to reveal his Human half.

"Do not worry, Mother, I shall endeavour to avoid confrontations."

"All I ask is that you try to understand why he acts as he does, Spock. He is head of a very important family, an Ambassador. He is one of the few Vulcans to marry an outworlder, the first Vulcan to father a child by an Earther which survived - you. He is a proud man, though he would never admit it, and just wants the best for you - he wants you to follow in his footsteps. Many of the Council would like to see Sarek fail; they are waiting for a slip from one whom they see as a popular Vulcan. He has enemies as well as friends, Spock, and one weakness, you and me... If we fail, it will be seen as Sarek's failure too."

Spock stared at his feet for several moments before quietly replying, "Mother, I do not wish to hurt him or you, but I am a being in my own right. I have needs of my own. I am of two worlds,

yours and his. I have tried to be a true Vulcan to please him and because logically it would seem to offer the most... but I keep slipping; the emotions of my Human side keep getting in the way. Ever since I was a child I have tried to make my father look upon me as a true son, but here I shall always be the halfbreed, the freak.

"Oh Spock, I know how difficult it has been for you. I watched the way the other children treated you, and some of the adults too. I tried to explain to Sarek how much harder it was for you to control your show of emotions, but because you were so clever with your other studies he thought you could overcome anything. He taught me control with far more patience than he has ever shown you, but he thinks I'm just an Earther. You, he sees as Vulcan."

"There is a problem for me, and I must find an answer. You are an Earther, Father is a Vulcan. What am I?"

And with that he walked slowly into the house.

CHAPTER TWO

Spock sat in his room gazing out of the small window at the night sky. A few weeks before, he had sat here wondering how to explain to his mother that he planned to reject his father's wishes for his future.

But Amanda had, unknown to him, already guessed what was in his mind, and suggested he visit Earth and meet the grandmother he had rarely seen since childhood. The reason she gave Spock was that her mother was getting frail, and had expressed a desire to see her grandson before it was too late.

The real reason Amanda arranged the trip was to give her son a breathing space, away from the pressures being put upon him by his father and tutors to enter the Vulcan Science Academy, known throughout the galaxy for its studies and research - to follow in Sarek's footsteps. The added bonus of the trip was to see Earth properly for the first time. He had accompanied his parents to the Vulcan Embassy as a small child but had been heavily protected from contact with Earthers who were eager to see the child of an Earth woman and "the man with green blood and pointed ears".

Amanda had arranged for Spock to leave the week his father was away visiting outpost ZE 23c, so as to avoid any objections to Spock's leaving.

Spock remembered the mixed feelings of fear at leaving the safety of Vulcan, the excitement of seeing a strange new world he had heard so much about, but couldn't remember, and the overwhelming feeling of freedom from the strain of trying to decide what path his life should take. Everything was lost in the blackness of space.

His mother had driven the aircar to the shuttle port and waved goodbye.

The first thing Spock noticed on arrival on Earth was how dark and cold this planet was compared to home.

He disembarked, and booked an aircar to take him the short

distance to his grandmother's house. As he stood waiting for its arrival, he realised Earthers were staring at him and pointing. He felt blood rush to his cheeks and tried hard to control his feelings. He must not let these beings see a Vulcan show emotions.

People were laughing, talking in loud voices, a baby was even crying! He wondered if this trip had been a terrible mistake and whether he should catch the next shuttle home to Vulcan. But Amanda had given him a letter and gifts to deliver, and he had promised to do so. But that still did not stop him from wanting to turn and run.

He shivered. Was it the cold or fear?

Crowds were pushing everywhere, rushing to and fro. There seemed no logical organisation. No order. So many people.

A small Earth child stopped and stared up at him.

"Mom, come and look, it's a man with funny ears."

The parent duly came and she too stared at Spock, then grabbing her youngster disappeared into the milling crowds.

A quiet voice behind him said, "Hello, are you lost? Can I help?"

Spock turned to gaze at a small young woman in the uniform of a Starfleet cadet. He recognised the badge as the same as worn by Federation Fleet officers who visited Vulcan.

"I do not require assistance, thank you," he answered coolly.

"I'm sorry, you looked lost." The girl smiled broadly.

This shocked Spock. How could she be so rude as to smile? He coughed and looked around, desperately hoping his aircar would arrive and rescue him from the situation, but there was no sign of it.

"I'm Clara, what's your name?"

"Spock."

"Hi, Spock, you're Vulcan aren't you?"

"Yes." He hoped that by answering in short words she would lose interest in him and go away, but instead she edged nearer.

Her arm brushed against his and he felt a blast of her emotions hit him. "Are you on your way to the Vulcan Embassy in London?"

"No."

"Oh."

She gazed up at him, liking what she saw.

He tried to avoid looking in her direction, feeling the beat of his heart hammering in his lower chest. Why had he let his mother persuade him this visit would be beneficial?

Clara would not be put off easily. "I'm studying at Starfleet

Academy. I take the final exams today, and if I pass with high enough grades I hope to be posted to a Starship. Mind you I wouldn't mind a Starbase posting. I just can't wait to get up there!" She pointed skywards, a look of rapture in her eyes.

Spock followed her gaze and realized how often he tended to look at the sky with a feeling of excitement and longing. He stifled the feeling before she could notice.

The sound of his aircar arriving interrupted any more conversation. He just nodded goodbye to Clara, placed his bags in the spare seat, handed the driver his destination chip and was sped away leaving Clara staring after him.

CHAPTER THREE

His Grandmother's house was small, well kept, built in the traditional Earth style. He paid the aircar driver and was left standing at the door, his bags at his feet. Suddenly nervous, he pulled himself stiffly to attention. He must not let his elderly forebear see him as anything less than a true Vulcan.

He composed his face into a blank mask that his father would have been proud of (if he were ever capable of that emotion). Spock rang the doorbell and waited... and waited.

His keen hearing picked up the sounds of someone moving about inside, and finally the door opened to reveal a grey haired older version of his mother. The likeness was amazing. The blue eyes, full of life, big just like Amanda's.

Suddenly he found himself gripped by frail arms in a hug. He gasped in surprise and pulled away. Pain and hurt filled the old lady's face at this seeming rejection. He stared, not understanding why she should be so upset.

"Spock, son... "

"I am Spock, but am not your son. I believe you mean to say grandson, for is that not how I am described in your culture?"

Taken slightly aback by his coolness, the elderly woman answered "Yes, of course. Come in, come in."

Spock picked up his bags and followed her through a dark passage into a room he found very pleasing.

Books lined the walls, fresh flowers in vases were on tables and shelves. The room was alive with colour. He set his bags down, and stood stiffly, as the old lady turned to look at her daughter's child. Child? He was nearly a man.

Tall, very slightly built, black raven hair that lay long to the collar of his robe, ears that tapered to points, eyebrows that rose into the dark hair. His skin was a faint green hue. The eyes were soft but shone almost black, unblinking.

She was amazed! As a baby he had looked almost Human, in fact Sarek had commented on the fact several times, but here was a young man with all Human characteristics nearly vanished. It was a Vulcan who stood facing her.

This was more than she had bargained for. Whenever Amanda had written or spoken over the com-link about Spock, she had made him sound more Human than Vulcan. Perhaps that was just wishful thinking on her part.

There was an awkward silence.

Spock felt... *sensed* her shock and clamped his mouth tightly shut in a fixed expression. But the old lady quickly recovered herself and said, "Spock, while you are here I'd very much like you to call me Elizabeth," and smiled.

"Elizabeth," Spock repeated.

"Yes. How's your mother?"

"Well. She sent you a letter, and gifts. I have them in my luggage."

"Oh, I'm sorry, I've been rude. You must be tired. I'll show you to your room so you can freshen up and unpack. I'll make a pot of tea."

"Tea?"

"Yes, it's a beverage. I'm sure you'll like it."

"Very well." Spock picked up his bags and she led the way to a small bedroom at the rear of the house. It contained a bed, chair, table, clothes racks and a computer link.

"Are you pleased? Amanda said if I wanted to make you feel at home I'd have to make sure you had a computer."

Spock was pleased and nearly let a smile slip. "Yes, it was thoughtful."

"Right, I'll make that tea now," and Elizabeth left him alone.

It took him less than thirty minutes to unpack the few things he had brought with him from Vulcan. He joined Elizabeth in the dining area.

She poured tea into china cups and handed him one. It smelt funny and was hot. Perhaps on this cold planet it was logical to drink liquids hot. He tasted it... horrid! But rather than cause offence he kept sipping till the cup was empty. Elizabeth asked about Amanda and Sarek and he replied politely, until the questions got around to him, and he became quiet. Elizabeth had heard from Amanda about the pressures on Spock and so didn't push him to talk, there would be time enough later, but she guessed it wouldn't be easy to break through the barriers he had put up.

The conversation was polite and trivial and after a while Spock asked to be excused and went to his room, where he sank on the bed and buried his face in his arms. He felt so alone.

CHAPTER FOUR

Over the next few days the silences between Spock and his grandmother grew less. He found she had a good knowledge of Earth

history, and a fair general knowledge, but science and physics did seem beyond her. Even so they often talked long into the evening and Spock began to realise where his mother had inherited her love of books.

Elizabeth tended to have a sleep after the noon meal, so Spock spent that time browsing through the large collection of old books. His favourites were 'A Tale of Two Cities' and 'Wuthering Heights'; he found he could relate to the sadness of the character Heathcliffe's lonely sad childhood.

One evening Elizabeth expressed a desire to visit an old friend. Would Spock be good enough to drive her? The friend was Admiral Mustin, who was on Earth just long enough to deliver a lecture at Starfleet Academy. So while Elizabeth met him in one of the hospitality suites, Spock was taken on a tour of the Academy's science section. He was made very welcome by the professors, as the son of the Vulcan Ambassador, but they soon realized his knowledge exceeded most of their final year students.

He was so absorbed he didn't realize the time, until a cadet gave him a message from Elizabeth that she was waiting to leave.

She smiled as Spock walked towards her. "Why Spock, if I didn't know better, I'd say you were in love."

"Pardon?"

"Your face, son, that raptured expression."

Spock was horrified. Had he really shown his emotions to such an extent? His face immediately assumed the mask of old, coldly unemotional.

Elizabeth's smile disappeared and she took him by the arm, ignoring the fact she knew he didn't like to be touched, steering him outside to a quiet corner. There she came to a halt and turned to face him.

"Enough! That is enough, Spock!" There was anger in her voice. "I have had enough of watching you struggling against your natural instincts. You will never be happy, Spock, unless you are true to yourself! Don't you understand?"

He answered, "Happiness is a Human emotion."

"You are half Human; you are half Vulcan - but mostly you are Spock! A unique being. A separate entity - you are not a shadow of Sarek! Oh, he is a good person, but so are you! Take the best of both your worlds, Spock, but be yourself." She looked into his face. "What do you feel? Tell me, what do you feel at this very minute?"

He didn't answer. He couldn't explain the feelings that surged through him. He was so ashamed. He turned a darker shade of green. Hot tears welled into his black eyes. He had never let himself even think about expressing to anyone how he really felt - not even his mother. A racking sob tore from his throat. He nearly choked trying to stifle it.

"Go on, son," Elizabeth whispered. "Let it all out."

Tears, hot, salty Human tears, rolled down his cheeks. He

tried to stop them but couldn't. The more ashamed he became, the worse it was. Loud sobs shook his body. Elizabeth drew him to her and gripped him tightly. Years of repressed emotions poured from Spock. He seemed to cry for hours although in reality it was a matter of minutes. Elizabeth held him until the tears stopped. He was deathly pale. She looked up into his face.

"Spock, don't be ashamed, son, this is just between us. It doesn't make you any less of a person. It makes you far better, because until you feel emotions you will never be able to understand them. Look upon this as just another lesson of life. All good beings have feelings of some kind, Spock, even Vulcans - they just don't all show them to everyone. Even your father has cried, you know."

At this he gasped in surprise.

"Oh yes, Amanda told me. On the day you were born, Sarek cried; not Human tears, but he might as well have for all the fuss he made when he saw you."

"He expects me to be like him, and I try, but I cannot. I am not good enough."

Elizabeth again let her temper flare. "How can you say such a thing? I have watched you since you have been here. You love music, art, science, nature, you have a thirst for knowledge. Your mother has told me of your academic successes. Your father is a fool if he doesn't consider you a worthy son, and may I remind you my daughter would not have married a fool." She took his arm. "Now come on home."

He looked at her with a soft smile on his lips. "Thank you."

"What for? Telling you the truth?"

He nodded and she knew there would be a bond between them from this moment. Amanda had been right when she had said Spock had hidden depths if only he would let them show.

But Elizabeth's hopes were short-lived. On arrival home there was a terse message waiting from Sarek, demanding that Spock should return home by the end of the month at the latest.

Spock, on reading it, retreated to his room, and when he emerged hours later, the Vulcan mask was firmly back in place.

Time was fast running out to the deadline for Spock's departure. Elizabeth decided to try to cheer up her grandson, who was growing more and more insular. She suggested a trip to the space dock to show him the latest developments being used by the 'Earth/Space Discovery Unit' based there.

At the same time he could book his shuttle ticket for the next available hopper to Vulcan. Spock was silent for most of the outward trip, but Elizabeth noticed the gleam in his eyes as the starships came into view.

He spent hours discussing fine details with engineers and computer experts while Elizabeth watched her grandson with pride. She couldn't help but keep thinking what a loss it was going to be to the world that he was destined to enter the enclosed world of some Vulcan Academy, but the power Sarek held over him seemed

insurmountable.

Spock was silent all the way home. He had booked a place on the next shuttle leaving for his home city Shikahr late the following afternoon. Elizabeth hated the thought of his leaving. Even with his cool quietness she enjoyed his company. There had been so many lonely nights since Amanda had left to get married. That evening he joined her, as was their routine, in the small lounge, she knitting, Spock watching people pass by the window. He seemed to get a lot of pleasure from observing Humans and what he considered their strange ways.

After a while he came and sat crossed legged at her feet, gazing up with his dark eyes until she put the knitting down and gave him her full attention. "Elizabeth, I have reached a decision. I am going to enrol at Starfleet Academy tomorrow."

He waited for her to say something, but she sat silent, so he continued, "I hope to be accepted into the science section. I believe I am well able to pass the entrance examinations with adequate marks."

Elizabeth took his hand in hers and looked hard into his face. "Spock, this is all very well, but what about your parents? Don't you think it might be a good idea to discuss this with them first? I know your father - "

He pulled away and stood up in one lithe movement. "I shall be going back to Vulcan as arranged, but as a member of Starfleet Academy. My parents will not consent to it, so it is pointless to ask them. I am sixteen, in your measure of time, which is old enough to enter without my parents' consent. I can see no logical reason to delay. My mind is made up, and I know my father will never change his."

Elizabeth knew Spock was right about his father, but she was amazed Spock had found the confidence to confront Sarek face to face with his decision.

There was little to be said. She watched as he paced the small room, then said quietly, "Spock, whatever happens between you and Sarek when you return home, remember there will always be a place here with me if you ever want or need it. Don't forget."

He nodded.

The easy part was making up his mind. The hard part would be facing his father.

CHAPTER FIVE

The next evening Spock took a last long look at Earth and the old woman he had grown to love before he boarded the shuttle bound for planet Vulcan.

Elizabeth stood on the observation platform and gave a wave, knowing full well Spock would never return it. But she knew he was sad at the parting, even if he would never let it show. She had decided not to contact Amanda until Spock had had a chance to break the news himself. Elizabeth would not be able to get him out of her mind, she kept imagining Sarek's reaction to the fact that not only

was his son and heir not prepared to follow his wishes, but was to leave Vulcan, perhaps for ever.

Amanda was in the rose garden watering the plants when she heard the gate open and close. She turned and saw Spock standing there. He put his luggage down.

"Mother, is Father home? I need to talk to him."

Amanda smiled. "No, my son, he has been called to a meeting of the High Council. He may be home late."

Spock's face revealed nothing of his inner torment.

"How was the visit? How is your grandmother? Come inside and tell me all about it."

Later that evening Sarek came through on the com-link to say that he wouldn't be home until the next evening, as there were problems concerning a Romulan Treaty violation.

Amanda was worried. She suspected Sarek wasn't as well as he pretended to be. He had had chest pains just before he had left, and his heavy work load didn't help.

Spock took the chance to speak to his mother alone. "Mother I must talk to you. I have tried several times to express my desire to see, do more..." He swallowed hard, knowing he wasn't explaining himself very well.

Amanda looked at him, realization creeping into her expression. "Spock, what are you trying to tell me? Are you planning to oppose Sarek's plans for you to attend the Academy?"

"I am already enrolled at an Academy, but it is on Earth, Mother. I enrolled as a Starfleet Cadet." There, he had said it out loud! The words he had practised over and over again in the privacy of his room.

Her eyes opened wide. "Oh, Spock... I knew you didn't want to follow Sarek's way, but to go to Earth! You can't have any idea what that will mean. Sarek will be shamed, and you will be the only Vulcan..." She didn't know how to say it.

So Spock said it for her. "Halfbreed? Yes, I realize that. But it is an ideal way for me to study and experience space travel, to be able to see new worlds for myself, not just read about someone else's discoveries. Can you not understand?"

Amanda's voice was louder than he had ever heard it. "Have you given a thought to your father's health? It is not good, and I dread to think what this will do to him."

Spock had hoped Amanda would support his decision, but as a Vulcan wife he should have guessed her first duty was to be seen to support her husband.

Amanda felt torn between her love for Spock and her loyalty to Sarek. She begged Spock not to tell Sarek at once, but to wait

until he had rested and recovered from the stresses of the meeting.

Spock said his orders to report to Starbase 12 did not take effect for ten days, so he would wait. Amanda was relieved, but knew it would only delay the explosion that was bound to happen.

Sarek was indeed ill on his arrival home, but with Amanda's loving care he seemed recovered in a few days.

Spock did not wish to delay any longer. He had found it very hard not to tell Sarek when his father had talked of the Vulcan Academy and how it would be of great benefit to Spock to visit before enrolment and meet the masters.

So after the talk to his mother in the rose garden he knew it was a case of upsetting his father or leading a life that would be a trial every day he lived, and knowing the Vulcan life span that could be a very long time.

He rose from the bed and carefully unpacked the Starfleet Cadet uniform he had bought from Earth and laid it out on the bed, smoothing out the creases with long slim fingers.

The evening meal was laid out on a low stone table when Spock entered the main living area. He felt a flood of relief that his father had not yet arrived home from the city. His mother was busy in the cooking area supervising the preparation of some special treat for Sarek's homecoming.

T'Belh, their elderly housekeeper, was dashing to and fro making sure everything was ready for her master's arrival. Fresh flowers were placed on the centre table. This was an Earth habit Amanda had introduced, and one Sarek liked. Even when she was off planet, the roses still appeared on the table by his command. He said the scent reminded him of her. There were no doubts in Spock's mind that his father loved his mother dearly. He chose to ignore her emotions, but Spock had grave reservations as to his father's feelings for him. There were no excuses or tolerance for slips of control. He remembered crying when his beloved pet sehlat had died, and his father hadn't spoken to him for weeks, relaying orders through his mother 'to pull himself together'. After Spock's visit to Earth, Sarek made it clear that no more offworld visits would be allowed without permission. Things had gone from bad to worse between father and son. Well, the time had come for Spock to stand his ground.

He stood and looked at his reflection in a highly polished vase. Mirrors didn't exist on Vulcan - they encouraged pride. The uniform was a good fit, but the boots... He had found a problem compared with the soft Vulcan sandals he was used to; the tight leather pinched his toes and clamped his calves in a vice-like grip. He stamped up and down the room until they felt better.

The noise must have disturbed Amanda. She appeared at the doorway.

"Oh, Spock, you don't plan to tell him tonight?"

"Yes, it can be put off no longer, Mother."

"It will break his heart."

But Spock would not be put off. He had inherited stubbornness

from her. As it was, things did not develop as Amanda thought they would. On his return home, instead of losing his temper and shouting, Sarek went deadly quiet and summoned Spock to his study.

Amanda paced up and down outside the door, trying to hear what was being said, but not having Vulcan hearing, she couldn't make out what was going on between the two men she loved. All was silence.

Finally, after what seemed like hours, Spock emerged. He strode without a word or look to his room and closed the door.

Amanda waited a moment then tapped gently on the study door; without waiting to hear Sarek's voice, she entered.

Sarek was standing with his back to her, looking at the portrait of Spock, a slim seven year old, painted just after his bonding to T'Pring. Sarek sighed and turned to her, his face stony, his eyes blazing.

"My wife, our son has refused to concede to my wishes and insists on leaving here to join the Federation of Planets' Starfleet. This is against my wishes, and so... I no longer have a son. I will as is my duty inform T'Pau - she as matriarch of our house must be informed. I will be shamed but there is no turning my son's thoughts. I will not have his name mentioned in this house again, do you understand?"

"Oh Sarek - please... " Amanda's voice trailed off.

"Do you understand, my wife?" Sarek's voice softened and he moved closer. "My wife, our son is lost to us. As a Vulcan I cannot concede over this matter. It would be considered a great weakness. The Healers were hoping that Spock would eventually become one of their members. Do you realise what a great loss to Vulcan this is?"

Amanda pulled back and stared in anger at her husband.

"A loss to Vulcan?! What about me? I'm losing my only son, OUR SON. OUR son, Sarek! The son we thought we would never be able to have!

"How could you be so proud? Yes, proud! You, who say pride is an alien emotion, have by your stubborn pride driven our son away!" And she ran from the room in tears.

Sarek called T'Belh to the study and ordered the removal of Spock's portrait into storage, then went to try and make his peace with Amanda.

The following morning Amanda went to Spock's room. It was empty. His clothes were packed into a travel bag, his harp lay on top. Sarek came behind her and put an arm around her shoulder. There was nothing left to say.

CHAPTER SIX

It was late that evening when Spock arrived home. He didn't say where he had been, but Amanda suspected he had walked in the

forge, - the lonely desert that Spock was fond of when he sought solitude.

He meditated in his room before joining her in the living area.

"Spock, please don't leave."

"Mother, my mind is made up, and anyway Father will not let me stay, unless it is on his terms."

"Perhaps it is all my fault. If you hadn't visited Earth this would never have happened."

Spock sighed. "Mother, you misjudge me. I would have left Vulcan anyway. For several seasons I have been considering what I would do."

Amanda said, "But Spock, have you really thought about all the consequences? What about T'Pring? What about..." She hesitated. He guessed what was bothering her.

"Pon Farr?" he said quietly.

"Yes, have you thought about the future?"

"Yes, I have. I will continue with my bonding to T'Pring, if she is agreeable, and will, I hope, be able to return at the necessary time."

"But Spock, what if you are deep in space and it is impossible for you to return in time?"

"Then I will die," he said simply.

Amanda gasped. "Spock, you know that is the reason so few Vulcans leave the home planet. The risk is not acceptable."

"To me, taking all factors into account, it is," he said matter of factly.

Amanda knew his mind was made up and nothing she could say would change it. "When do you leave?"

"I must see T'Pring and her father and explain the position." This he didn't relish. "Also, I must see T'Pau. I am ordered to report to Starbase 12 by the end of the week, where I join more cadets before we are transported to Earth to begin the assessment course."

"Do you plan to speak to your father before you go?" She was clutching at straws, one last hope of a reconciliation between father and son. But he dashed any dreams of that.

"Father has already made his position clear. I am no longer his son."

"Spock, make me a promise, that you will try to keep in touch, even if it has to be secretly."

He was shocked that his mother would consider deceiving Sarek, but he nodded his agreement, for he had no desire to lose all contacts with home.

"To save any embarrassment I shall leave here tonight and stay in ShiKahr until I depart."

As he turned to go to his room, Amanda quickly scooped up a book from a slide table and thrust it into his hand. He looked at the title. A Tale of Two Cities.

"Take it, Spock, as a keepsake."

Spock didn't understand the expression. "A what?"

"A keepsake. It's an Earth expression. It means 'as a reminder of me'."

"Mother, I do not need a book to remind me of you. That seems illogical."

She couldn't help but smile.

His eyebrow raised, and she began to laugh at this Spock-like way of showing his feelings.

"I love you."

He didn't alter his expression.

Amanda said, "I know it isn't considered a very Vulcan thing to say, but you had better get used to people doing and saying things that are strange to you, Spock. Earthers aren't the only illogical race in the galaxy you know."

He pulled his lips together in a tight line. That was the most he could do to let her know he loved her too.

He left the house by the rarely used door that led into the sand garden. Walking to a far corner, he knelt and paid his last respects to the grave of I-Chaya, his old pet sehlat, who had been his only true childhood friend. Then without a backwards glance he left the family home, perhaps for ever. He walked to the city of ShiKahr, and booked a room in the only accommodation house. The clerk recognised him at once as the son and heir of Sarek, family of T'Pau. He wondered why the wealthy son should be staying in a basic block of accommodation when the family had estates and houses nearby?

Spock ignored the stares, and on arrival at his room had a sonic shower, before walking the short distance to the house owned by the family of his bondmate T'Pring.

Spock entered a small forecourt to be met almost at once by T'Pring's father, who strode to meet him. The tall Vulcan pointed to a patio area. "Here, son of Sarek, we will talk. I have much to discuss with you, if all I have heard is true."

Spock followed and politely refused to sit, preferring to stand, arms behind his back, hands gripped together in a tight knot.

Spock remained silent, until he realised he was expected to open the conversation. "I have come here to discuss my bonding with T'Pring. To let you know I shall be leaving Vulcan, for perhaps a considerable time, but fully intend to honour my bond with her, together, touching and not touched." He used the ancient words with respect, but T'Pring's father exploded. Spock was shocked at the

hatred in his voice.

"So you are leaving Vulcan, son of Sarek! How could you shame my daughter? This marriage has been delayed enough already. Are you looking for excuses to break this bonding? It has stood since you were both children. You are at an age for Pon Farr and so is she. Do you hope to die rather than bond? Is that it? Because that is what people will think. They will say you preferred death to a marriage to she who was your wife!"

Spock was taken aback by this outburst. "No. No, I came here to say that no matter in which direction my life takes T'Pring is still my wife and I will come and claim her at Pon Farr."

"And what of your inheritance? If you are away and Sarek your father dies, the estates will go to the next of kin. As an only son with no other siblings, what happens if you cannot be traced?"

Spock let a slight sneer slip into his words.

"Before I leave I will instruct a scribe to make record that T'Pring will get all that would be mine."

This seemed to satisfy the irate father and he noticeably calmed down. "You will wish to see T'Pring before you leave?" It was more a statement than a question.

Spock did not, but knew it was unfair to her not to agree.

He nodded affirmatively and was left alone to await the arrival of the girl he had seldom seen since they were joined in the mind link at seven years old. The rustle of silks made him turn to see T'Pring staring at him. No emotion crossed her beautiful face. Yes, she certainly was beautiful in a classic Vulcan way. Almost as tall as Spock, black hair piled on top of her head in a complicated style. She wore a silver, silken robe held by an IDIC buckle at her slim waist.

Spock had always thought her beautiful, but there was an iciness that radiated from her. Perhaps that was the reason he had always tried to avoid contact with her - or was it that she was 'so Vulcan' and made him feel 'so Human'. She was perfect at keeping her thoughts well shielded. He felt she could easily read all his deepest thoughts and it made him nervous.

"Spock, have you come to claim me? For I did not feel the call of Pon Farr."

A silence.

She continued, "Or is there some other reason to bring you here?" There was a coldness to her tone.

Spock swallowed hard and said, "I have come to say I will be leaving Vulcan in a few days to pursue a career in Starfleet. I have already enrolled and expect to be away for some considerable time.

She said nothing.

Spock continued, "Therefore I offer you the chance to break our bonding if you wish, in order to leave you free to arrange another."

Her eyes flashed. "How generous of you, Spock! And what do you suppose will be made of that? That the famous Sarek's son finds T'Pring unsuitable as a wife, so much so that he escapes to space to avoid the marriage, preferring the company of Humans? Spock, you are from an ancient, wealthy, respected family, even if your father did marry an outworlder. Will you be blamed? No - it will be I who am disgraced. And not only that - what about the loss of wealth I will suffer? No, Spock, no! I will hold you to the bond until it suits me to break it, if ever. Do not flatter yourself that I hold any affection for you - I do not! How could I? For you are an Earther, and only because of your family's position are you tolerated here. But I will use this bond to step over you and your family to improve myself."

Spock was amazed that during this outburst T'Pring's voice remained controlled and quiet. Only her eyes expressed the temper boiling inside her.

"So be it, T'Pring, I will make arrangements for you to be paid a regular amount for the period I am away, and make you my heir should I not return. Will that be enough to heal your hurt?"

"Hurt? Spock, are you suggesting that I too feel your Earther emotions?"

He knew things would only get worse if he stayed any longer, so giving the Vulcan salute he whispered, "Live long and prosper, T'Pring."

"Oh yes, Spock, I certainly shall," was her answer.

When he had gone she fled to her father. "How could he do this to me? Have I not waited for him? How many would have even considered a halfbreed for a husband? There is no guarantee he will have a Pon Farr and return to me."

"Well, daughter, if he does not you will be a very wealthy woman," comforted her father, the light of greed in his eyes.

T'Pring stared at the gate where Spock had left. "He does not want me now, but there will come a time when he will. But after all, if I reject him at Pon Farr it may lead to his death." She could gain comfort from that thought. The only trouble was she *did* desire him as a mate, but he was too free-thinking to control; on Vulcan it was still a matriarchy at root and T'Pring was ambitious. Spock would leave her in his shadow. No, she must find another, more easily managed male to bond with.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Spock walked straight to the house of T'Pau. He asked for an audience, which to his surprise was granted at once.

He entered T'Pau's room and was at first not sure if she was there, for the room seemed empty. He stood still and waited until a slight sound drew his attention to a high backed chair facing away from him. T'Pau suddenly stood and turning to him said, "Spock, come here, I will speak of deep matters with thee."

He walked slowly to her, and stood a few feet away from this powerful woman who led his family in all things. She looked deep into his face. "Spock, thee are bonded to the girl T'Pring, are thee not?"

"Yes."

"Do thee ask for an annulment of the bonding?"

"No."

"Does thee intend to go from this place, and leave T'Pring here?"

"I wish to follow a career which will lead me to far places."

T'Pau tightened her lips. "Thy father has told me of thy desires, Spock."

He swallowed hard but said nothing.

"Ambition is a powerful emotion, one that is hard to reject."

Again Spock did not answer.

"If thee go from this place, T'Pring will wait for thy return?"

"I have asked that she does so."

"Thee have Human blood Spock, does this make thee Human in thy thinking?"

"I am Vulcan. Did I not pass the Kahs-Wan?"

"Yes, thee did, and thy father was eager to tell me so at the time of it, but not so eager to tell me of thy plans now."

Spock felt this was not going well for him.

"I ask you to give me time, T'Pau, to explore both sides of myself, away from this place."

"Do thee wish to go to Gol?"

"No."

"Spock, thee are Sarek's son, an important child of Vulcan. I cannot stop this thing thee are intent upon, but I warn thee, thee may find that what thee seek is not easily found. For I fear thee seek what is already here. Look into thyself, Spock."

She turned away, indicating the interview was over. He was not sure if she had given her blessing or not, but it made little difference. For he had gone too far to turn back now.

On his way back to the accommodation block he called at a scribe's house and arranged to have all his income made available to T'Pring and his declaration at death recorded and stored. He also left a letter for his parents, to be delivered if he was ever declared dead or missing in action.

That night he lay awake, thinking of the day's events and what lay ahead. Here on Vulcan everyone looked upon him as a Human, waiting for his emotions to slip. While he had been on Earth, everyone had considered him a Vulcan; and he had found there if emotions slipped through his barriers no-one seemed to notice or care very much. Yes, it would be easier for him on Earth. His Earth grandmother had shown him love and understanding. He was looking forward to seeing her again.

Perhaps when he had learned to control his feelings better he would be able to return to Vulcan, his father would accept him and so would T'Pring and her family.

The day of his departure arrived. Spock caught an aircar to the shuttle port. It was crowded with Vulcans travelling interplanet. He made his way to the less crowded offplanet lounge. He was casually looking out of the large glass dome windows as he waited for a crowd to disperse in front of him, then he stared... was that his father's private shuttle parked, waiting to pick up passengers? Yes, he recognised the family serial number.

He made his way to the V.I.P. waiting area and saw his parents. Had they come to try and dissuade him? Had his father relented at the last moment? He couldn't believe so.

Perhaps Sarek was on his way to the Vulcan embassy. His question was answered, when his musings were interrupted by a port officer.

"Excuse me, Spock, son of Sarek, will you be travelling with Lady Amanda to Earth? If so let me ensure your luggage is put aboard."

Spock stared across at his father and mother, saw the dark robe she wore, the tear stained face, his father's hand discreetly holding hers. A heavy weight seemed to press on his chest, making breathing difficult.

"No. No, but tell me, do you know why the lady is travelling today?" It was a shot in the dark - why would a port officer know such a thing? But he got an answer immediately.

"Why yes, her mother has died. She goes to attend the ceremonial."

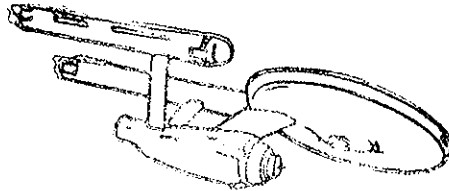
The news hit Spock like a sharp blow in the face. The fight to control his features was hard, but he did it.

"Thank you. Please have this bag placed on the next shuttle for Starbase 122." The man left, and Spock moved to wait in a less visible position.

So that was it. Now he would truly be alone amongst the people of Earth. He made a promise to himself - never to let another Earther close to him again. Their life span was too short, and their emotional powers to get to heart and mind must never again be underestimated.

No, Elizabeth would be the first and the last to see the real Spock.

His shuttle was the next to leave. He walked stiffly towards it, and away from his past, little knowing it would not be as easy as that! For across the blackness of space, a young cadet called James T. Kirk was preparing to join his first Starship... but that is another story.



THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN OF THE ENTERPRISE

Once upon a long ago,
Sometime in the future,
There is a legend of a starship and her crew,
A ship that bears an old and honoured name,
For she is called the USS Enterprise.

And here I list for all time,
The names of her famous bridge crew,
They number seven in all,
And they are the Magnificent Seven of the Enterprise.

Her Captain, and leader of this gallant band,
Is a man called James T Kirk.
Spock is her First Officer and Science Officer,
With Dr Leonard McCoy her Chief Medical Officer.
Next come her Chief Engineer, Montgomery Scott,
And Uhura, her Communications Officer.
Last, but certainly not least, are
Sulu, her Helmsman and
Chekov, her Navigator.

These brave and loyal friends and fellow officers,
Form a command team that has a unique and special rapport;
Drawn together not just out of duty,
But out of friendship and love for each other,
They sail the stars of time.

These people have become legends in their own lifetime,
And whether their story begins in the past, present or
future matters little,
For their legend will carry on long after our lives and
theirs have ended,
For legends never die.

Christine J Jones

BENEATH THREE MOONS

by

Gail Christison

T'Pau of Vulcan rose stiffly from her meditation stone. The decision, and the logic of it, still troubled her, but time was short, much shorter than she would have hoped.

The small body shuffled haltingly to the com-link on the wall. "Vulcan Space Central? This is T'Pau. I require communication with Captain Suvak of the Starship Intrepid..."

The three moons of V'hailiel formed a golden arc in the violet sky of dusk.

T'Nuel turned from the breathtaking view, her face schooled into Vulcan neutrality. The sight of small S'kon, brow furrowed in concentration over a new puzzle, however, almost brought the hard earned control undone. S'kon was T'Nuel's only child, the only link to her dead consort, Sondor, former Regent of the colony planet, V'hailiel.

"Is there something wrong, mother?" S'kon's green eyes scanned her face with childish concern.

"It is not logical for the Vulcan High Council to sanction this government's decision to install a nine year old child as Regent of V'hailiel."

S'kon tilted his silken head. "There must be a Regent, mother. Have they not incarcerated those who assassinated my father? It is not logical for you to be so concerned. After the Passage ceremony I will no longer be a child," he finished solemnly.

T'Nuel turned away. He had hit upon the one fact that most shook her control.

S'kon returned to his puzzle, satisfied that his mother was not suffering from any serious complaint. A servant entered and spoke to T'Nuel, who left in haste. S'kon raised no more than a cursory glance before the last piece of his intricate puzzle fell into place.

"V'hailiel is an experimental colony founded fifty-two standard years ago by Vulcan on a preselected, unpopulated planet. As a sociological experiment its success has been, at best, indifferent. It has long been contended by significant sections of the Vulcan community that Vulcan society today is incomplete. They believe that by combining the precepts of logic with the ancient laws of Vulcan, what they perceive to be a grave imbalance could be corrected," Spock finished.

"Is one of those 'significant sections' the reason why the Enterprise is investigating an assassination and kidnapping on some minor planet while the rest of Starfleet is tied up with the Romulan incursion?" drawled Leonard McCoy.

Kirk's look announced that he was also interested in the answer to McCoy's question. They all knew exactly who it was that the doctor was referring to.

"It would appear that T'Pol specifically requested our presence. After delivering T'Pol to V'hailiel, Intrepid was immediately reassigned to the Klingon border patrol," Spock told them.

"So that the Constellation was freed to go to the Romulan neutral zone," Kirk confirmed.

"T'Pol actually left Vulcan?" McCoy marvelled. "I'll be damned!"

Spock's eyebrow elevated and Kirk almost smiled. Instead he straightened and turned to the Vulcan. "Why T'Pol? Why would the most important individual on Vulcan travel all the way to V'hailiel and drag us into its affairs as well? Any one of a number of Vulcan VIP's could have represented her interests, so why T'Pol?"

"I would not presume to speak for T'Pol, Captain; however there is a ceremony to be performed," Spock replied sedately.

"Ceremony, Mr. Spock?" said McCoy.

"It is an unusual and ancient rite whose purpose is to protect the lineage of the clan leader. When a juvenile is left to fill the role of a leader, he or she must meld with the closest living relative capable of performing the ceremony. If this is not possible such a person may be nominated to perform the ceremony. It allows the child premature passage from childhood to maturity."

McCoy rounded incredulously on the Vulcan. "Are you tryin' to tell me that you'd wipe a kid's childhood, just like that - leave an incomplete adult in a child's body?!"

"The process is too complex to explain to a non telepath, Doctor; however, your statement is extremely inaccurate. No memories, no portion of the child's identity is lost. Rather, his controls are... strengthened, allowing him to cast aside the emotional vestiges and impulses of childhood, allowing a clear, rational thought process and adult judgement when required. Please try to remember that we are talking about a Vulcan child, not a Human child."

"Point taken Mr. Spock," Kirk finally interceded.

"It still isn't right! This is just the kind of thing I'd expect T'Pol to be involved in!"

"Bones! That will be enough," Kirk reprimanded. "Spock, Sontar's killers are supposed to be behind bars. What are the chances that the kidnapping is not related to the assassination?"

"There is no way of assessing at this point, Captain, but it is significant that the abduction occurred *before* the Passage ceremony. Had the boy been taken afterwards, he would have been the

legitimate Regent, and his mother would then have had the right to rule in his stead. At this point T'Nuel, as one not of the bloodline, has no rights."

"Which means two things: one, T'Nuel is ruled out as a suspect, and two, we have to find out who's got high ambitions on V'hailiel," said Kirk.

"Or," McCoy mused, "somebody else has a particular interest in putting their own man in there."

"Have the murder suspects been formally identified?" Kirk took up the idea.

"Thus far they have identified only Sirn, a student from V'hai, the capital. He is the leader of a group opposed to the current government," Spock told them.

"And the others?"

"At this point they are known only to be off-worlders. You have a 'hunch', Captain?"

"Maybe. Maybe Bones did. I think there's a lot more going on on V'hailiel than just a minor political hiccup."

Leonard McCoy grumbled as they materialised and the Vulcan-like gravity settled upon them.

V'hailiel was larger than Earth, and equally as beautiful. Even its climate was far more temperate and hospitable than Vulcan's red ball. The city of V'hai was little different to any Vulcan settlement except for the pleasantly balmy weather.

Kirk, McCoy and Spock climbed the steps of the government building, enjoying the sunshine and the gloriously fresh air.

T'Pau was little changed from their last meeting, except perhaps for a sense of great weariness. She and Spock exchanged greetings. Kirk met the black eyes defiantly.

"Do not be so proud, Captain. Does thee understand why thee still lives?" she asked cryptically, her face set.

After a beat, Kirk inclined his head in acknowledgement of her victory. He respected the Vulcan matriarch too much to have taken her for a fool.

"Well I'll be damned!" whispered McCoy.

"Indeed," Spock intoned rather fervently.

"Gentlemen - " T'Pau indicated the ornate conference table.

When they were all seated Kirk leaned forward. "Why is it necessary for a starship to be involved in the affairs of this planet?" he asked, without preliminaries.

"Because, James Kirk, this is a Federation colony, and it is endangered. The child must be returned alive. Thee has the facilities to find him, if he lives."

McCoy sat up straighter. He could have sworn that he saw a flicker of something in the ancient eyes.

Kirk gazed directly into them, "I would like Dr. McCoy to perform a detailed medical examination of the murder suspects," he said.

"Agreed."

"What do we already know about them?" McCoy enquired.

"At this time it is known only that the followers of Sirn are believed to want to end the line of Sondor in favour of their own choice. It is also considered significant that this problem has arisen at a time when V'hailiel is about to begin exploitation of its vast deposits of topaline, placing it in a position of considerable importance with the Federation." T'Pau seemed less than impressed with her own dissertation.

McCoy whistled. Kirk scowled at him.

"And the Federation has control of the Capellan deposits - the only other substantial source of topaline in the known galaxy," Spock finished, ignoring both of them.

McCoy completed the presentation of his report to Kirk on the medical examinations of the prisoners.

"Covert operations this far into Federation territory aren't known to be the Romulans' style. With all their current activity, I'm betting the Klingons are probably in this somewhere..." James Kirk leaned back in his chair. "I want that child found, alive. Mr. Spock, I have a difficult assignment for you; infiltration of Sirn's group. Can you do it? The nature of this colony means that they are going to be somewhat more emotional than your usual logical self," he smiled.

"It will be an annoyance, Captain. However I shall not allow it to interfere with my duty."

Kirk smiled again. "Fine," he said. "Myself, Mr. Sulu and Mr. T'Vara will move among the locals, particularly the off-worlders, and find out as much as we can about what's going on on V'hailiel. I assume T'Vara is ready for landing party duties?"

"Certainly, Captain," Spock replied. "The Lieutenant may be newly graduated, but she is a Vulcan."

McCoy chuckled.

Kirk heard it and sighed. "Dismissed, everyone. Mr. Sulu, you and Lt. T'Vara meet me in the transporter room at point six, ship time."

Sulu nodded and followed the others out. Kirk sat a few moments longer in the empty briefing room after they had all gone, going over his conversation with T'Pau, trying to remember every nuance of body language, of tone, that might tell him something more about the old termagant's part in the situation. He heard, more than saw, Spock return.

"You also sensed something more, Captain?" Spock said intuitively as he halted opposite the Human.

"She's hiding something." Kirk looked up.

"Indeed. The child is T'Pau's great-grandson. He is my cousin. Skon, my father's father, was her brother."

"Then Sondor... "

"Yes, Captain. Her only surviving grandson. Sondor and his consort of fifty years were among the original colonists. T'Bera died in an aircar malfunction. Their two adult children did not choose to migrate. Sondor subsequently married the unbonded T'Nuel."

"Interesting. That's not it though. I still think there's something else," Kirk said thoughtfully. "I'm going to talk to T'Nuel herself. She may even be able to help us to get inside Sirn's group. They may still have the answers we need."

T'Nuel rose formally when the two Enterprise men entered her apartments. They were not what she had anticipated. She had expected the one called Kirk to be larger, somehow, tall and powerful, to fit his reputation; and she had expected her husband's kinsman to be more... Vulcan. It was unnerving the way these two fitted together, even at first glance; T'Nuel was not sure she approved. She was certain Sondor would not have.

She exchanged greetings with Spock, then turned to Kirk. "Captain Kirk, what can I tell you that I have not already said many times in the official reports?" She managed to keep her voice even.

"I don't know, Lady T'Nuel. Is there anything more you can tell us?"

T'Nuel looked him up and down almost nervously. "You refer to T'Pau's belief that I am responsible for S'kon's disappearance."

Kirk controlled his surprise nearly as well as Spock. His mind raced. This certainly complicated things.

"Why would you reveal this to us, when T'Pau would not?" Spock asked bluntly.

"Because I alone know the truth of it. T'Pau speaks only of facts, never suspicions alone."

"Logical," Spock said.

T'Nuel's eyes narrowed, uncharacteristically for a Vulcan. "I have grown very tired of logic, Mr. Spock. I want my child returned to me. My consort is dead and his kinswoman believes I may have helped to kill him. I say to you now that I did not kill Sondor, nor do I know where my child is. I grieve still for my consort. I do not wish also to have to grieve for my son."

Spock was discomfited by the plea in her eyes. The two philosophies which V'hailiel had intended to combine seemed to war within the woman and he resented his sudden flare of empathy.

"If it is at all possible, we will find S'kon, Lady T'Nuel," Kirk reassured her. "But we need your help. If you know of anyone who might have contact with Sirn's people, you must help Spock move among them, so that we can learn what they know about the murder, and perhaps, your son's disappearance."

"Done," she said, calm for the first time.

"Then I'll leave you to it, Mr. Spock. I have another appointment to keep." Spock nodded. "If you will excuse me, Lady T'Nuel?"

T'Nuel inclined her head silently. They watched him go in silence before she turned to Spock. "My servant is said to have a kinsman among those suspected of being Sirn's followers. T'Vesa is sworn to me by her life. I am certain she will help us."

As he followed the plain, hawk-faced young servant through the back streets of V'hai, Spock turned the memory of T'Vesa's immediate, loyal response to T'Nuel around like a puzzle. He saw no logical reason to doubt her, yet there was something... *something James Kirk might have understood*, he mused, and resisted the urge to pull at the collar of the local dress he now wore.

T'Vesa pulled open the door of a large, empty storage facility. Spock stepped in behind her, his eyes scanning the place for trouble. It was his last conscious thought before blackness and searing pain became his world for a time.

Captain Kirk ushered his two companions into the only off-world bar on V'hailiel. It was still very new. One could still smell the fabrics and plastics of the furnishings - *obviously an effort to capitalize on the expected influx of outworlders when the topaline mines became common knowledge*, Kirk thought, watching the Rigellian owner/barman almost running up and down the bar to keep up with demand.

T'Vara looked striking in local costume, which had far more flattering lines than did its Vulcan counterpart. Sulu looked as out of place as Kirk did in Terran civvies, but seemed to be enjoying the freedom.

The Captain settled at the bar next to a young Tellarite, while Sulu seated T'Vara at a table.

"Much excitement around the place?" Kirk enquired in a bored voice.

"Who wants to know?" growled the pig faced being.

"Jim - Jim Clarke, Rep for the Titan Mining Company," he lied smoothly.

"Yeah? Well plenty's been going on lately. Crazy damn Vulcans fighting over politics. Never seen the likes."

"Oh yeah? Who started it?" Kirk responded easily.

"Bunch of radicals from the University. Mind you, they haven't

got enough sense between the lot of 'em to work out what's really going on around here."

"You said a mouthful," Kirk agreed. "So, you got ideas of your own about what's happening?" he probed.

"Plenty!" The Tellarite snorted and gurgled into his drink.

Kirk groaned inwardly and switched to another tack. "Me, I think somebody's after the mining rights so's to keep companies like Titan right out of the running," he told the Tellarite loudly.

"Stupid Human. Can't see what's right in front of your face," laughed the alien.

"Huh?"

"Same thing that went on back on Capella IV. That airbag Kirk and Enterprise nearly fell on their faces on that one," chuckled the Tellarite.

Kirk gritted his teeth and smiled. "Right, but I haven't seen anything suspicious yet, and I've been here a week already."

"Like I said: stupid," the alien repeated. "By the way, the name's Benev."

"I think it's time you explained why I'm so stupid," Kirk let his voice rise just enough to provoke Benev's argumentative nature.

The big alien sighed. "Look, tribble brain, we're talking about topaline, which we've got, and the Klingons haven't... And when they want something they don't blasted well advertise!"

"Oh," said Kirk meekly. "Buy you another?" He pointed to the empty glass.

"Maybe you aren't so stupid after all," Benev chuckled. "Make it Denebian rum." Kirk ordered two and slid a glance at Sulu, who was entertaining a Rigellian trader and a female pilot from Arianus II. T'Vara looked fascinated and strained at the same time. Kirk felt a little sorry for her.

"Eh, Clarke!" Benev punched his arm and was very lucky not to be on the receiving end of a reflex response from Kirk. With great effort the Captain simply craned his neck to see what the alien was looking at.

They looked innocent enough. A pair of unkempt Klingon traders. *An excellent job, really*, thought Kirk, though he couldn't help the chuckle that followed. He wondered if Klingons ever took their 'fleet issue black boots off, as he watched two excellent pairs move across the room.

"Not so stupid..." Benev repeated, watching him. "Who are you really?"

"A friend," Kirk replied. "Barman, take care of my friend for the rest of the night," he added, and spread ample credits on the bar.

"Not so stupid!" the Tellarite chuckled as Kirk wandered over to Sulu's table, his eyes on the Klingons who were preparing to

leave. It took only minutes to get rid of Sulu's guests.

"What is it?" Sulu asked when they had gone.

"There are two Klingon agents in here dressed like traders. We are going to follow them. They're leaving."

They trailed them to a new building only about a block from the government building, watched them look around furtively then disappear inside.

It was dark. For once Spock's eyes took a long time to adjust. He held his head for a moment, searching for the disciplines to still the throbbing pain.

T'Vesa had gone. For a while he concentrated on listening to the sounds of the room and when he was certain he was alone, got slowly to his feet. He was still in the storage building, locked in some sort of small office. A single Klingon guarded the door. Silently Spock put his hands on the transparent pane, eyes on the back of the Klingon head that leaned against it. After a few moments of concentrated 'suggestion' on the Vulcan's part the Klingon slid down the door, asleep. Moments later Spock had forced the simple lock and stepped over the unconscious guard to freedom, determined to get back to the government complex - and confront the Lady T'Nuel.

The door was not locked. Kirk pushed it open and stood aside. Nothing happened. The group entered cautiously, with military precision.

The building was new, only just ready to be occupied, apparently by the business sector. Kirk's eyes darted about. "Look for exits! Up, down, out - any exits," he ordered.

Sulu discovered a lift. *No power yet*, he mused, and waved a hand over the call pad anyway. The lights came on and moments later the doors opened. T'Vara saw Sulu crumple. She fired, stunning one Klingon and catching another one in the periphery. He clutched his arm and tried to fire at her but the partial stun was gradually taking hold. T'Vara stunned him again without blinking.

Kirk raced across from the head of a stairwell just as she bent over the helmsman. "Alive," she said.

"Thank God," breathed Kirk. His expression became thoughtful. "Klingons rarely leave a disruptor on stun. What does that tell your logical mind, lieutenant?"

"The probability is that it is a precaution against damaging something - or someone - in their custody. Klingons do not normally take prisoners," she added, almost to herself.

Kirk nodded. "Stay with Sulu. I'm going to see if I can find out what keeps a Klingon disruptor on stun."

Disapproval flashed in the young Vulcan's eyes in an endearingly familiar way. "With all due respect sir, the Captain of a starship should not - "

"I'll be the judge of that, Mister. Objection noted." Kirk hid his amusement behind the terse reply. He glanced at the stairs, then activated the lift.

T'Vara filed the lesson away for the future.

The lift opened only moments before Kirk reached the door at the bottom of the stairs. He flattened himself and threw it open - and leaped, unseeing, across the arc of what was now close to killing disruptor fire. Of the four Klingons, only one was watching the fire exit. Kirk blacked out in a sea of agony, able only to hear the scream echo through his mind - his scream.

T'Vara braced herself and helped Sulu to his feet. For the first time, as Sulu's confused mixture of concern, affection, and worry flowed through her, T'Vara began to believe that her assignment to the Human ship might not be such an error after all.

"Can you walk?" she asked.

"Sure. Where to?" Sulu said determinedly.

"Down there. The Captain has gone on alone."

They moved gingerly down the stairs. The basement was empty. Across the room a second exit door stood ajar. "A second exit in a basement?" pondered Sulu, peering into the unlit blackness beyond.

"Seismic activity is not unknown here. It has long been a common Vulcan practice to have an alternate fire exit from a windowless room. It should lead to the surface, or to another building," explained T'Vara, stepping into the eerie darkness. "I cannot find any way to activate the lights," she added.

"Then you'll have to help a little," Sulu said sheepishly. "I don't see as well as Vulcans in this light."

"Mr. Sulu, beyond this door there is no light," T'Vara replied literally, her classic oval features shadowed in the half light of the exit.

"Exactly," said Sulu, catching her sleeve as she disappeared. Her hand was very warm in his, as warm as the tunnel was cold.

For about fifteen minutes they edged along in silence. T'Vara saw the light first. They eased up very slowly to where it was filtering under a door.

"The government building," muttered T'Vara, her uncanny Vulcan sense of direction surprising the helmsman.

Behind the door they could hear rough voices, speaking heavily accented Standard. Sulu motioned the Vulcan to listen and wait. An angry voice was asking questions. After each question would come a silent pause and then a muffled thump or slap and a groan of pain.

Controlling his outrage, Sulu indicated a count of three. T'Vara flattened herself against the wall, weapon raised. Carefully Sulu eased the hinged door ajar, counted three and kicked it open, firing simultaneously with T'Vara in a wide arc. All four Klingons went down.

Sulu ran to the battered Human sagging in a chair. "The

Captain's been caught in the stun!" he cried, only too well aware of the effect of multiple stuns on Humans. He tried frantically to loosen the bonds. "He's not breathing. Help me!" he grunted, easing the lifeless form onto the floor.

In the midst of their frantic efforts at CPR Spock arrived, breathing heavily from his headlong flight across town in answer to Kirk's unknowing psionic cry. He snatched up Sulu's communicator.

"Spock to Enterprise! Four to beam up, medical emergency!" he ordered.

"Mr. Spock, we have an emergency of our own going here. And Chekov says we canna beam anything through the government building. 'Tis shielded from transporter beams as a matter of security. Ye'll have to get outside," Scot's sorrowful voice told them.

"He's breathing now, Mr. Spock," Sulu panted.

"Spock, where are you exactly? I'm comin' down, if these damn Klingons don't do anything before I can get to the transporter room," McCoy's voice cut across the Vulcan's relief.

"The basement, Doctor. However I do not know who now has control of the building. We will try to bring the Captain outside. Spock out."

Spock lifted the broken body in his arms. Sulu was amazed at the Vulcan's strength as he strode up the stairs by threes, seemingly unburdened by the weight in his arms.

The great hall of the government building was deserted. Half way across, Spock felt James Kirk die. He stopped so quickly that the others almost careered right past.

"Get McCoy," he ordered Sulu, setting the body down gently. "Then go back to the ship. Report to Mr. Scott. They need you. Hurry!"

Sulu ran across the hard floor as Spock and T'Vara began CPR again. Spock's arms shook as they forced Kirk's heart muscle to start again. It took longer this time, but it did start.

"Go with Sulu; find out where McCoy is," he ordered T'Vara when the Doctor hadn't appeared.

Alone, Spock finally had a chance to assess the extent of Kirk's injuries. The broken nose, the facial bruising, the split lip... He tore open the leisure suit, revealing the battered chest. Disruptor-mottled flesh stood out horribly, covering his arm, shoulder and hip. Kirk had been extraordinarily lucky to have escaped a full blast.

Spock went over him gently, finding broken ribs beneath more bruises, and more disruptor damage. An area was turning dark purple. He clenched his fist in anger. They had beaten Kirk on the disruptor damage.

Kirk's head moved slowly from side to side. Spock did not want him to regain consciousness now. Where was McCoy? The Klingons must have attacked the ship.

He had to move the Captain to a safe place. His dark eyes

scanned the building. A moment later he paused, badly startled. At the top of the great staircase, a replica of the one in the oldest government building on Vulcan, stood the last person in the galaxy Spock needed to see at that moment.

Defiantly he gathered the Human in his arms again and climbed to the top. "Where can I take him?" he demanded without preamble.

Ancient black eyes met unrepentant brown ones. "Come," she said, moving surprisingly lightly for her vast years. "There," she pointed. "Thee will find medical supplies. It is an emergency medical facility. Go." She gave him leave to rush past her.

T'Pau watched him stride ahead and followed at her own pace, her mind replaying every detail from the time the other Human left the building. She had watched Spock and T'Vara work on the Enterprise Captain. A memory echoed in her thoughts... *Art thee Human, or art thee Vulcan?* She would consider the question again.

Inside the infirmary, Spock set Kirk on the only diagnostic bed and opened his communicator.

"Spock to Enterprise."

"Enterprise. Uhura here, sir. Mr. Sulu and Mr. T'Vara are aboard."

"Where is Dr. McCoy?" Spock interrupted.

"We've been under attack since Mr. Sulu contacted us sir. Dr. McCoy didn't make it to the transporter room. The main transporter is out. He was trying to get to the Engineering decks when we were engaged by a K'Tanga class vessel. Dr. McCoy is standing by to speak to you, sir."

"How is he, Spock?" the Doctor interjected.

The Vulcan immediately launched into a detailed medical description of injuries and tricorder readings.

"How'd you recalibrate a V'hailien tricorder so fast?" McCoy's voice trembled.

"You forget I am a Vulcan, Doctor," countered Spock softly, understanding.

McCoy hurrumphed and began to reel off instructions and treatments, all of which Spock memorized.

"Implementing," he confirmed, reaching for a hypospray. He worked on in silence. The small amount of stored Human plasma and expanders were sufficient to keep Kirk's blood volume up while the clotting agent had time to stop the haemorrhaging in the disrupted areas. McCoy had discouraged the use of painkillers and sedatives until Kirk was stabilised, deeming the dangers more important than the slim possibility of Kirk regaining consciousness.

The door closed behind T'Pau. "Will he live?" she asked bluntly.

"I do not yet know," Spock replied, dropping a small medical

sensor onto a tray. He looked up. "There is something else: the servant T'Vesa led me into a trap. Did she return to the Lady T'Nuel?"

"She is with T'Nuel in her quarters, awaiting word of S'kon."

"He lives?" Spock asked as he continued to work on the Human.

"T'Nuel has not said otherwise."

Spock looked up at her, then drew his eyes away and began a second course of hyposprays.

Eighty minutes later Kirk stirred, his eyes darting furiously beneath their lids, his body jerking in some nightmare terror. Suddenly his eyes opened, horror filled, and his hands clutched at Spock's steadying arms. A split second later Kirk's conscious mind contacted the agony of the disruptor injuries. He screamed as Spock had only heard Christopher Pike's men scream on the battlefield of Rigel VIII. He continued to scream in terrible, mindless pain until the painkillers Spock slammed into him had taken effect.

Ashen, the Vulcan dropped the hypospray on the bench, his eyes still on the Captain. Kirk's breathing was dropping back to a steady rate. Spock was unaware that his hands were trembling. Recognition finally lit the hazel eyes.

"Spock...?"

"I am here, Jim," he said gently.

"You're here..." Kirk repeated, distress still evident in his voice. The pain still lingered.

"Obviously, Captain," Spock replied with studied lightness.

"I remember," Kirk whispered. "I saw Sulu... I saw you and T'Vara. I was going to die - didn't want to. You... you wouldn't be there. Neither would she..."

"Lt. T'Vara?" Spock feigned misunderstanding.

"No... Enterprise, you idiot!" Kirk tried to smile but it pulled his split lip.

"I take offence, Captain. *Idiot*, by old Earth definition, refers to - "

"Shut up, Spock." Kirk chuckled painfully and touched the Vulcan's still unsteady hand as it reached for the tricorder. "And thanks..." he sighed, and lost consciousness again.

Spock gently laid the hand beside its owner and activated the tricorder, reluctantly meeting the Vulcan matriach's steady gaze from the high backed chair in which she was seated.

"Thy Vulcan blood does indeed run thin, Spock," she said softly.

Spock froze.

"And thy Human blood also. Does thee understand, Spock? Does thee see the truth?"

Spock searched her face, to discover the reason why T'Pau would want to invade his privacy. "Understand what? I have no wish to be told yet again that I am unique, T'Pau. It is just another way of saying I am alone," he replied wearily, changing IV bottles.

T'Pau had no answer to his emotion-charged, yet ultimately logical, response. She had tested this one once before, and by her standards he had proved worthy, even if not strictly by history's rules.

Spock applied a pressure bandage to an area of Kirk's upper arm. T'Pau watched curiously the gentleness and the care, and began to understand.

"Thee are not alone, Spock." She spoke slowly, consideringly.

Spock looked up quickly, but veiled his surprise behind half closed lids. Her gaze moved to the Human who had given so much in the past for this one.

"With James Kirk, thee are T'hy'lla. He understands. Value that, Spock. Long after the Healer Soreth gives up my Katra to the Hall of Thought I will consider the logic of thee, and the one called Kirk."

A tremor of recognition passed through Spock. "It will be soon?" he asked softly.

The old head nodded. "I wait only to see the child. It is already too long, but he must have Passage to keep alive the meaning of V'hailiel. Sirn's way is not why this colony was formed." The reason did not fool Spock any more than it would have fooled Jim Kirk.

The Captain was restless again. He started to thrash about, crying out, trying to warn somebody about something. The IV was ripped out.

"Jim!" shouted Spock as the new tear in the Human's flesh bled fiercely.

Kirk woke in panic, saw Spock and tried to sit up. Instantly the Vulcan was at his side.

"Jim, you must not struggle. Be still. I am here."

"Spock? Where are we? What happened?" A strange expression crossed Kirk's face. "S'kon!" he cried, then subsided.

"We are in the infirmary of the V'hailiel Government building," Spock told him, but Kirk seemed to be having a waking dream.

"I saw him, Spock! When the lift opened. A female Vulcan - running, with a child. The Klingons had them." He grimaced with pain, his breathing ragged.

Spock had momentarily covered the hand that clutched his left arm. When the Human passed out again, he lifted it off and straightened. He met black eyes that were filled with the same uneasy suspicion that filled his.

The communicator beeped suddenly. "Enterprise to Mr. Spock."

"Spock here," the Vulcan replied, his relief almost audible.

"Sir, the Klingon battle cruiser is destroyed." T'Pau's eyes closed. "Mr. Scott can lower the shields now. He wants to know if you are beaming up, or if Dr. McCoy should come down?"

"Tell McCoy to come down, and bring an evacuation team, quickly. There is a small medical facility here. The Captain will have to be moved outside to beam up. Tell the Doctor: up the stairs, third door on the left. Spock out. T'Pau," Spock went on slowly, checking the Human, who was resting quietly. "I must find T'Vesa now, and the Lady T'Nuel. I must leave him in your care," he said reluctantly.

"Go," she said heavily. "In the East Wing."

When he reached T'Nuel's chambers, Spock drew the phaser T'Vara had left him and stepped unhurriedly into the room, catching both women off guard. They rose from their respective chairs and faced him.

"Explain yourself, T'Vesa. Where is the boy?" he demanded.

"I have nothing to say. Do what you want. Will you discipline an unruly servant with a phaser, Spock?"

T'Nuel had turned to her, stunned. "T'Vesa?"

"I have no knowledge," she replied diffidently.

Before the other woman could speak, Spock interrupted. "Lady T'Nuel, I must ask you both to come with me," he said, motioning at T'Vesa with the phaser. They acquiesced without argument, allowing Spock to shepherd them from the room in silence.

"Spock!" Kirk struggled toward consciousness.

"Commander Spock is not here."

Kirk tried to sit up again.

"No, Captain. Do not attempt to rise. It is illogical to compound the damage without need. Spock is investigating your information about the child. Dr. McCoy is coming up the stairs at this moment. Rest now, James. Your T'hy'la is safe."

Kirk wished that he could see her face then. There was a strange, haunted quality behind the tiredness in her voice. Painfully, he twisted enough to see the old eyes close slowly. *Meditating*, he decided.

Suddenly the door crashed open. Kirk smiled at the panting Doctor framed in it. McCoy lost no time in examining him.

"Where's Spock?" he asked as he worked.

"Investigating."

"He left you with T'Pau?"

"Mmm. Must've been too much for her too. She's meditating me out of her system." Kirk's words slurred a little as the new sedatives, no longer contra-indicated, began to take effect.

McCoy looked sharply at the old woman. The tiny figure seated in the arm chair seemed to be resting comfortably, for a Vulcan. McCoy picked up a local mediscanner. He pointed it at her, prepared for the scolding he would get when she was disturbed by its tones.

A small hand rested on each arm of the chair, and the ancient shoulders rested against its high, smooth back. She sat, balanced and erect, her eyes closed and her head tilted slightly, so that the sharp chin rested on one shoulder. A few seconds later McCoy turned the tricorder off and quietly started to prepare Kirk for transportation to sickbay.

Leonard McCoy watched gratefully as the medics carried a peacefully resting Kirk down the stairs. The Doctor was about to return for his own equipment, when Spock and two females appeared at the other end of the corridor. He waited for them.

"Mr. Spock, I have some bad - "

"I know, Doctor," Spock said tonelessly as they reached him. "T'Pau was my kinswoman." He handed McCoy his phaser and entered the room alone.

Spock sat, straight-backed, in the Enterprise briefing room. At his right were Leonard McCoy, Hikaru Sulu and T'Vara; to his left, T'Nuel, T'Vesa and the principal murder suspect, Sirn.

On the bridge Montgomery Scott and Pavel Chekov carefully scanned the settled continent of V'hailiel for Klingon life signs and checked them against the immigration records.

"Sirn, you are charged with the assassination of the lawful Regent of V'hailiel. Do you have anything to say in your defence?" Spock opened the hearing.

"This is no court of law. I decline," said the young man curtly.

"Accepted. You will shortly be charged by the authorities with the murder of the child S'kon by association. Do you have anything to say in your defence at this time?"

Sirn's eyes widened in surprise. T'Nuel's hand flew to her mouth and T'Vesa's look of stunned disbelief made her look very young and vulnerable. The Enterprise crew persons stared at Spock in silence.

"That," said Sirn finally, in a level voice, "is a lie."

Commander Spock's eyes hardened. "It is not."

"But T'Nuel - " he argued.

"Yes. T'Nuel. How did you convince Sondor that you were a Vulcan?"

T'Nuel did not flinch. "He has always known the truth," she replied without emotion. "I have done nothing against my son and I have not felt him die. Did you believe I would not?"

"How did you come to V'hailiel?"

"My parents - my adoptive parents - brought me here because they thought it would be more compatible with my nature. They were scientists. They spent a great many years working on the planet Hellguard, where I was found."

A flicker of recognition crossed Spock's features, and something else, more akin to pain or sadness. He nodded. "This, of course, will be verified. Accepted though, for the record." He turned to T'Vesa. "T'Vesa, you are also to be charged with S'kon's murder. Were you aware that you were sworn to a Romulan?"

"I was not. I... I am Sirn's bondmate. What I have done, I have done for this reason. When I left the child he was alive."

A strange, almost tortured look crossed Spock's face. Sirn looked with regret at his bondmate, then turned to Spock.

"What she says is true. We did not know that Sarel and Sotik were Romulans. They came to us as Vulcan offworlders sympathetic to our vision of V'hailiel's future. We must have interfered with their - and therefore the Klingon's - plans by taking S'kon before the Passage."

"Why did you take the child?" asked McCoy.

"To force T'Nuel to realise that the 'Passage' is a thing of the past. Many of us believed that a growing colony must be ruled by a strong, adult leader, but we had no voice. It would have been too much for the boy. There was too much at stake to rely on a child and a ceremony which has not been performed since ancient times."

"And Sondor?"

"We had no part in Sondor's murder. We stood against many of his policies and ideas, therefore it was logical to suspect us of the crime, until it was revealed that Sotik and Sarel were Romulan murderers in our midst."

"If you weren't allied with them, who was the Vulcan woman with the child, seen by Captain Kirk?" McCoy asked.

"It was I," T'Vesa said clearly. "When the Klingons ambushed Spock, I ran."

"I escaped through the emergency exit in the basement, got back to the surface and went straight to S'kon, fearing that they had found him. He was safe, but only moments later we were trapped by four of them. First the lift activating, then Captain Kirk's arrival, distracted them enough for us to escape."

Again, Spock's expression seemed almost pained. Fortunately, all eyes were on T'Vesa.

"Where did you leave S'kon, T'Vesa?" he said slowly.

"In the north wing basement, in an assisted meditation trance,

deep enough, I hoped, to keep his presence from his mother and T'Pau," she answered, confused by the question.

Spock's face drained of colour. He rose and left the room silently. All assumed that the Hearing was suspended. McCoy, however, had seen Spock's face. He followed the Vulcan out into the corridor and was shocked to find him leaning against a bulkhead, experiencing some kind of delayed shock.

"Spock! Are you ill?"

The familiar form slowly straightened. He turned. "I am not ill, Doctor. An idiot perhaps," he added, his face softening just a little. "I want you to take a security detail to the north wing basement of the government building."

"But - "

Spock shook his head. "He is not dead, doctor. Logically, by her own admission to me, T'Pau's death could only have meant that she knew S'kon was dead."

"But she was very ill Spock. I know, I - "

"Irrelevant, Doctor. If she believed that the boy was alive she would have waited."

"Then how is he alive...? Wait a minute - that trance!"

"Indeed. When the Captain relayed his information about S'kon being in the hands of the Klingons, both T'Pau and I believed that they must have taken him to their ship. It was a logical step."

"And when the Enterprise reported the ship destroyed... " McCoy continued, incredulous.

"Yes," Spock confirmed sombrely.

"Spock, you thought we killed him?" McCoy compulsively grasped his arm.

"I am quite in control, Doctor," the Vulcan said stiffly.

"The hell you are, buster!" replied McCoy. "My God, Spock, T'Pau let herself die because of a mistake... Sweet Jesus... "

"No purpose is served by your repeated invocation of deity, Doctor. You have your orders. I suggest a little more alacrity," Spock informed him woodenly.

"I'm gone already," McCoy snapped, and disappeared around the curve of the corridor.

While they waited for McCoy, Spock arranged to have T'Pau's body taken back to Vulcan and to have the charges against Sirn and T'Vesa amended, with appendices from the computer record, himself and Dr. McCoy.

Scott and Chekov successfully beamed nine Klingons, including those held in custody on V'hailiel, into a temporary shipboard jail. Since there was no ship for them to be sent back to,

Enterprise would be taking them to Starbase 42, where a long range Vulcan warp shuttle would also collect T'Pau's remains.

Spock stared at the log. He was more tired than he cared to admit. Jim Kirk hadn't regained consciousness. He knitted his fingers, disturbed by his thoughts... How could he have been so wrong?

The intercom beeped.

"Mr. Spock to the transporter room. Mr. Spock - "

"On my way. Spock out."

Leonard McCoy stepped off the platform with a satisfied, very Human look on his face. Lt. Leslie followed, a precious bundle clutched close in his arms. The rest of the team melted away. Leslie paused before his temporary Commander.

"Go ahead, Mr. Leslie," prompted McCoy.

Spock accepted the charge silently, ignoring Leslie's half smile and giving McCoy a mournful scowl. They travelled to sickbay together, Spock ever aware of the fragile form in his arms.

The meld was brief. McCoy hovered over the boy for a long time afterward. Spock stood away, his eyes only for another sleeping form across the room. The Captain had not stirred since McCoy had brought him to sickbay and patched him back together again.

"He'll be fine, Spock," McCoy said gently, "and back on the bridge in a few weeks. Someone else would like to speak to you right now."

Spock turned to meet S'kon's serious, ponderously green eyes.

"Live long and prosper, Commander Spock."

"Peace and long life, S'kon."

"I thank you," the small boy said carefully.

"I am gratified to see that you are well," Spock replied. "The Lady T'Nuel will be here momentarily to see you."

S'kon's gaze slid away to the unconscious man across the room.

"I am pleased that he will be well, my cousin," he said softly and looked up at Spock with a maturity beyond his years. Before Spock could reply, T'Nuel arrived and came quickly to her son's side. After a beat, Spock turned on his heel and left. McCoy watched him go, before turning back to the child.

"I can't believe she's gone," James Kirk said for the second time in ten minutes. He sat propped up with pillows, flanked by McCoy and Spock, shaking his head over their detailed account. "I remember as clearly as if she'd just spoken, the last words she said to me: *Rest now James, your* - " he paused. The word seemed too personal, somehow, to be repeated, even in front of McCoy. " -

friend is safe," he amended.

When Christine Chapel called McCoy away a few moments later, Kirk looked up to find the Vulcan's gaze on him. For a few moments they shared the silence, and the memories of the last few days.

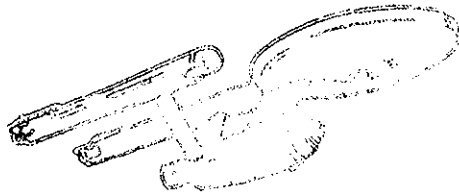
"Tired, Spock?" Kirk said softly.

"Only of this assignment, Captain," Spock replied soberly, but the gleam was back in his eyes. One of Kirk's lapful of tapes fell on the floor. Spock turned to stoop and retrieve it.

"Spock, what does *T'hy'la* mean?" Kirk asked quietly.

"Everything," the Vulcan said softly, then turned and dropped the book tape on the bedclothes, before beginning a detailed semantic explanation.

Jim Kirk listened. He smiled. But he had only heard one word...



HEROES

The stories that are told
To the young by the old,
Of castles and dragons,
And knights who were bold.

In ivory tower, or dungeon or cave,
Fair maiden or a Princess Blood Royal,
Held prisoner by magician, or knight turned disloyal,
Waits for a brave knight, her life for to save.

Then the white knight arrives on his trusty steed,
His armour all shining, his lance held high,
To right the dishonour of this cowardly deed,
His life and his honour he has pledged; to succeed or die.

We live in a world that needs its heroes,
Be they fact or fiction, legend or true,
Someone to believe in when life gets tough,
Whether knights of old or spacemen new,
We all have our heroes to look up to.

Benjamin T Jones